

King visits the Public Security Department

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday called at the Public Security Department (PSD) where he was received by its Director General Nasouh Muhieddin and PSD senior officers. King Hussein was briefed by PSD Assistant for Traffic Affairs Abdul Raouf Hussein on the services offered to the citizens as well as the latest studies on traffic accidents in Jordan which were prepared by the PSD. The King was also briefed on the future projects to expand and develop the traffic institute to offer better services for the PSD cadres through training them. General Muhieddin presented King Hussein with a gift on the occasion of his 62 birthday.



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Joint U.S.-EU statement on Mideast in the works

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. and European Union officials are working on a joint statement on the situation in the Middle East. Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos said Friday. "We are working on a common declaration on the Middle East. We will consider the publication of this declaration," after meetings among U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Mr. Poos said (See separate story). Mr. Poos, who holds the rotating EU presidency, made his comments after the biannual U.S.-EU summit Friday. Mr. Poos also said he wanted "better coordination" between Europe and the United States on the Middle East. "If both speak with one word, this will be felt as a strong signal," he said.

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King calls at Armed Forces Headquarters

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday called at the Armed Forces Headquarters where he was received by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh and senior Armed Forces officers. The King and Field Marshal Mirai discussed issues of concern to the Armed Forces.

Tataristan PM visits Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister of Tataristan Farid Khairallah Mohammad arrived in Amman Saturday on a several-day official visit during which he will convey a message to His Majesty King Hussein from president of Tataristan. Mr. Mohammad was received at Amman Airport by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his Cabinet members.

Israel launches air raid against Hizbollah targets

SIDON (AFP) — Israeli warplanes on Saturday afternoon launched a raid on an area of south Lebanon known as a stronghold of the Hizbollah guerrillas. Lebanese police said. They fired two air-to-ground missiles only minutes apart on hills near Iqlim Al Touffah at around 3:00 p.m. local time. The police said, without saying if there were any casualties.

Elderly man hurt in explosion in south Lebanon

NABATTYEH (AFP) — A Lebanese man aged more than 70 was wounded in an explosion Saturday in a village bordering the Israeli-occupied zone in south Lebanon, Lebanese police said. Mohammad Faur Al Azza was working in his field overlooked by Beaufort Castle, where the Israeli army has been based since 1982, when the blast occurred, police said, without identifying the source of the explosion. The man, who suffered serious injuries to his hands, was taken to hospital in Nabatiyeh, they said. On Friday, three Lebanese civilians were killed and a fourth wounded on Friday in mine blasts near the self-declared Israeli "security zone." Hizbollah, which spearheads attacks to oust Israel from the border zone, held the Jewish state responsible for the attack and threatened to retaliate.

Thousand people attend PFLP rally in Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Around 1,000 people marched through the town centre here Saturday to mark the 30th anniversary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a left-wing group opposed to the peace process with Israel. Demonstrators shouted nationalist slogans and burned an Israeli flag and an effigy of an Israeli soldier before dispersing. Palestinian police did not intervene. Founded on Dec. 11, 1967, the PFLP has stuck defiantly to the demand for a unitary, secular and democratic state covering the whole of pre-1948 Palestine, also supported by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat until his 1988 recognition of Israel's right to exist.

Majali pledges government's commitment to implement Monarch's directives

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Saturday sent a message to His Majesty King Hussein pledging the government's commitment to the implementation of the Royal directives delivered in the King's letter on Thursday.

Dr. Majali said the government will extend support for the Palestinian brothers and will seek the implementation of all the commitments contained in the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Dr. Majali said the government will do all in its power to safeguard national interests, notwithstanding the complications in the peace process caused by Israel's procrastinations.

"I was honoured to be your companion in pursuing the peace process since its very start and marched behind your leadership following your directives and learning

from you that peace can only be established on the foundations of right and justice, the return of the land, and justice for our brothers in Palestine," said the prime minister.

"You have been demanding that peace should be comprehensive on all tracks... the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese — and that the Palestinian people should regain their full legitimate rights and should attain their aspirations in building their independent state on their national soil of Palestine," he added.

Reaffirming that the government will pursue the King's directives, the prime minister stressed that "your government realises your keenness on safeguarding the brothers' interests in Palestinian lands, and that you will be delighted at their success and share with them the pain, and that you feel that whatever is

good for them is good for us. We are with them in body and soul, protecting them from harm, extending to them assistance and support, coordinating with their leadership in line with your directives and we are keen on upholding their independent decision as they seek to win their independence and succeed in their negotiations."

The prime minister stressed that the government "will obey your directives and maintain coordination with them in all fields... political, economical, developmental, cultural and informational... for our and their own benefit."

He said that the government will be fully committed to the implementation of the King's directives on all matters connected with the remaining seven issues in the final stages of the negotiations "with a view to extending support for the Palestinians... and these

issues concern Jerusalem, the refugees, borders, settlements, water, security and sovereignty."

"Your government will do all that in its power to safeguard our national interests, and regain our rights and will carry out all commitments as provided for in the peace treaty in a balanced and effective manner as directed by Your Majesty," stressed the prime minister.

He said that the government will pursue its efforts despite the present Israeli government's delays and procrastinations "and despite the Israeli attempts to sow seeds of dissent and divisions."

He said "you have set for us the route to be followed and we are going along this course and I pledge before you to do all that in my power to live up to the confidence entrusted in me."

Albright meets Netanyahu, Arafat in year-end push for Mideast peace

Chirac tells Netanyahu proposed plan not enough

PARIS (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, pressing efforts to revive the moribund Middle East peace process, met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Paris Saturday after making "headway" with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Geneva earlier in the day.

The meeting with Mr. Netanyahu was Ms. Albright's second in 24 hours as she accelerated a new round of shuttle diplomacy aiming for substantive progress by Christmas.

In Geneva, she told a joint press conference with Mr. Arafat that their talks had been "useful and constructive."

"The [Palestinian] chairman and I went over some of the interim issues and we are making some headway on those and should be able to come to closure soon," she added.

She said she would meet again with President Arafat, and with Mr. Netanyahu, after a trip she is to make to Africa next week.

"I will meet separately with the prime minister and chairman... and we will be able at that stage to move forward," she said. "They have some work to do and some decisions to make before we have

those meetings somewhere in Western Europe."

The Palestinians have scoffed at an Israeli West Bank redeployment initiative which Washington has guardedly welcomed. They insist the plan goes against past agreements signed by Israel for a withdrawal covering 90 per cent of West Bank territory.

According to Israeli press reports, Mr. Netanyahu is prepared to cede only six to eight per cent of the West Bank, 70 per cent which remains under full Israeli control.

Ms. Albright said Washington "would like to see a credible further redeployment, to make sure there is a combination of quality and quantity."

President Arafat said the Palestinians would stick to their demands for more. "We are not asking for anything more than what we've signed," he said.

He added that Israel's request to accelerate talks on a final settlement must go hand in hand with implementation of existing autonomy accords. "We cannot jump the interim agreements," he said.

Ms. Albright said her talks with President Arafat also focused on security issues. There is "no question there has been improvement in security cooperation but there

is always more that can be done," she said.

She said she "reminded the chairman that there can be no complacency, it requires a 100 per cent [effort]... that terrorists are unrelenting and so must efforts against them be unrelenting."

Ms. Albright then flew to Paris to meet with Mr. Netanyahu, who had held talks with French President Jacques Chirac just hours earlier.

President Chirac told the Israeli leader bluntly that the proposed West Bank redeployment was not enough to get the peace process back on track.

His spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said the pair said "things that only friendship allowed them to say."

Describing himself as "pessimistic" over the current peace stalemate, Mr. Chirac said Israel's latest proposals "do not seem to us to be capable of giving the impetus needed for a resumption of the peace process and re-establishment of confidence among the main players in the process."

"Without credible initiatives in line with the Oslo and Taba accords [on Palestinian autonomy], it is feared the situation will continue to deteriorate, to become less and less

manageable and that the great hope born for peace will dissipate completely," Mr. Chirac was quoted as saying.

Mr. Netanyahu made no comment on leaving the talks, but Mr. Chirac's spokeswoman quoted him as saying during the meeting that he wanted "to advance the peace process."

Mr. Netanyahu "said he was convinced peace would be made, that he was not pessimistic and that it was a question of time," she said.

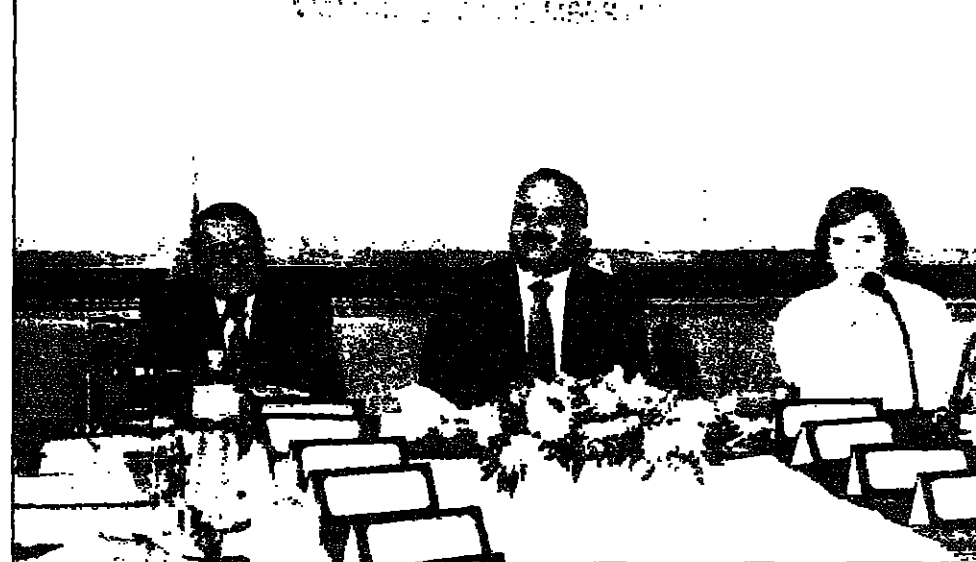
A U.S. official travelling with Ms. Albright said that although the peace talks appeared stalled, there had been progress since the secretary's impromptu meetings with Mr. Netanyahu and President Arafat last month.

"Three weeks ago the Israeli government was not prepared to do a further redeployment," said the official. "Now it has said 'yes' in principle."

"We are now in the nuts and bolts of a further redeployment," he said, adding, that Mr. Netanyahu "did not pull out the maps... We have not said yes or no to any particular number."

"We don't think anything is set in stone," he added. "We emphasise the need for the redeployment to be credible."

ROLE OF NGOs IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY EUROPE AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES SEMINAR



Crown Prince Hassan speaks at a seminar organised by the Arab Thought Forum on Saturday. The seminar is held under the title: "The Role of NGOs in The Development of Civil Society: Europe and the Arab Countries" (Photo by Youssef 'Allan)

Humanitarian issues should be taken into account in future discussions of refugee problem — Prince Hassan

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday reaffirmed Jordan's total support for the Palestinian people in their quest to establish their own independent state on their national soil.

He stressed that the problem of refugees cannot be settled within the framework of Israel's re-deployment policy and that

humanitarian issues should be taken into account in future discussions of the problem.

Addressing the opening session of a seminar on "The Role of NGOs in The Development of Civil Society: Europe and the Arab Countries" organised by the Arab Thought Forum, Prince Hassan said that the Western media which covered the daily events during

the Palestinian intifada failed to look into the real causes behind the events. He also said that they failed to examine the difficulties the Palestinians are facing and the suffering they encounter on a daily basis.

In his speech to the delegates, Prince Hassan referred to the intransigent stands of the Israeli

(Continued on page 7)

Iran calls for unity as OIC ministerial meeting opens

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi called Saturday for unity and peace coexistence among Muslim countries as a ministerial meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) opened here.

"Multiplicity, unity, peaceful coexistence and future development of the Islamic world in the 20th century" were the themes of the gathering which opened with recitals of verses from the Holy Koran.

"The Islamic civilisation is enjoying a very specific and fruitful regeneration and we need to ensure political

progress, economic development and active cooperation for a civil and just society," Mr. Kharazi said.

Mr. Kharazi, the chairman of the meeting, highlighted four major challenges facing the Islamic world: Palestine, Quds [Jerusalem], Bosnia and Afghanistan.

In a reference to U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, Mr. Kharazi warned of a "rising tide of unilateralism from certain powerful members of the international community."

He also called for a "genuine and authentic picture of Islam to be presented to the world to counter negative

images" propagated by Western countries.

A representative from Morocco, which has presided over the 55-nation OIC over the past three years, said the conference should "pave the way" for the Islamic countries to enter the next century.

The meeting was due to start in the morning, but was postponed to the afternoon as ministers continued to arrive.

The ministers are to discuss 142 draft resolutions adopted during experts meetings last week, many of which targeted the United States and Israel.

Kingdom awaits new legislation as democracy finds itself at a junction

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's infant democracy stands at a crossroad after the Islamist-led opposition boycotted last month's general elections, politicians said.

Efforts to revive democracy and guarantee greater freedoms, launched after the 1989 riots, now primarily rested in the hands of the regime and the ability of political parties to organise themselves and come up with practical plans of action, they added.

The bulk of the reform

process hinged on three laws which His Majesty King Hussein promised to introduce eight days ago when he inaugurated the first parliamentary session since the November 4 elections.

King Hussein told deputies that the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali will submit to Parliament draft laws on elections, political parties and professional associations to help "modernise and develop existing legislation."

"Foremost among them is a new elections law that takes into consideration the changes and developments of

this age, establishes increased equality and justice among all people, and maintains the constants of our national march," the King stated.

He said the two other proposed laws will help develop political parties and the 80,000-strong professional associations, key critics of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

However, the opposition, for the first time out of Parliament since the resumption of democracy eight years ago, stepped up criticism of the three planned legislations and has remained divided on the future course of democracy.

While some welcomed King Hussein's initiative as a move in the right direction, others expressed fear the "already tailor-made" regulations will just tighten the screws on already tough laws.

"As long as we have a [democratisation] process going on... as long as we can express our views and publish them in the newspapers, and manage to have some sort of opposition in Parliament, we have to build on all this," said former Minister Ibrahim Izzeddine.

(Continued on page 7)

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Iraq says no oil to flow unless food comes quicker

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi newspapers said on Saturday that a drop of Iraq's oil would be sold on world markets until the United Nations addressed its protests over slow food and medicine deliveries.

The government daily Al Jumhuriya, defending Iraq's decision on Friday to suspend all oil exports, said its U.N.-brokered "oil-for-food" deal had become "oil-for-nothing" because of the lengthy delays in humanitarian purchases.

It called on the international community to persuade the U.S. and Britain, which it blames for the delays, to accept its call for a review of the programme.

"We hope that Russia, China, France and the non-permanent members of the Security Council will continue their efforts to achieve the simple, legitimate Iraqi requests and dismiss America's evil aims," Jumhuriya Editor Salah Mukhtar wrote in a front-page editorial.

"Until this happens Iraq's oil pipelines will remain closed and not a single drop of oil will emerge from them."

The U.N. Security Council voted on Thursday to extend the oil-for-food deal, under which sanctions-hit Iraq is allowed to sell \$2 billion of oil every six months to pay for food and medicine, into a third six-month period.

But despite admissions by U.N. officials that the programme suffers from complex United Nations' bureaucracy and is in any case too modest to meet all of Iraq's humanitarian needs, the council put off any changes until Secretary-General Kofi Annan submits a report at the end of January.

Iraq, which wants a complete lifting of the sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, has been half-hearted about the programme

which it sees as a cover to keep the main sanctions in place.

At the start of the second phase of the deal in June, it held back oil exports for more than two months after similar complaints over the food and medicine deliveries.

It has insisted on U.N. agreement of its food distribution plan and changes to speed up the approval of its humanitarian purchases before it resumes oil exports.

"As a result of the deliberate delays, many international agencies have said that instead of 'oil for medicine and food' it has become 'oil for nothing'," Mr. Mukhtar wrote.

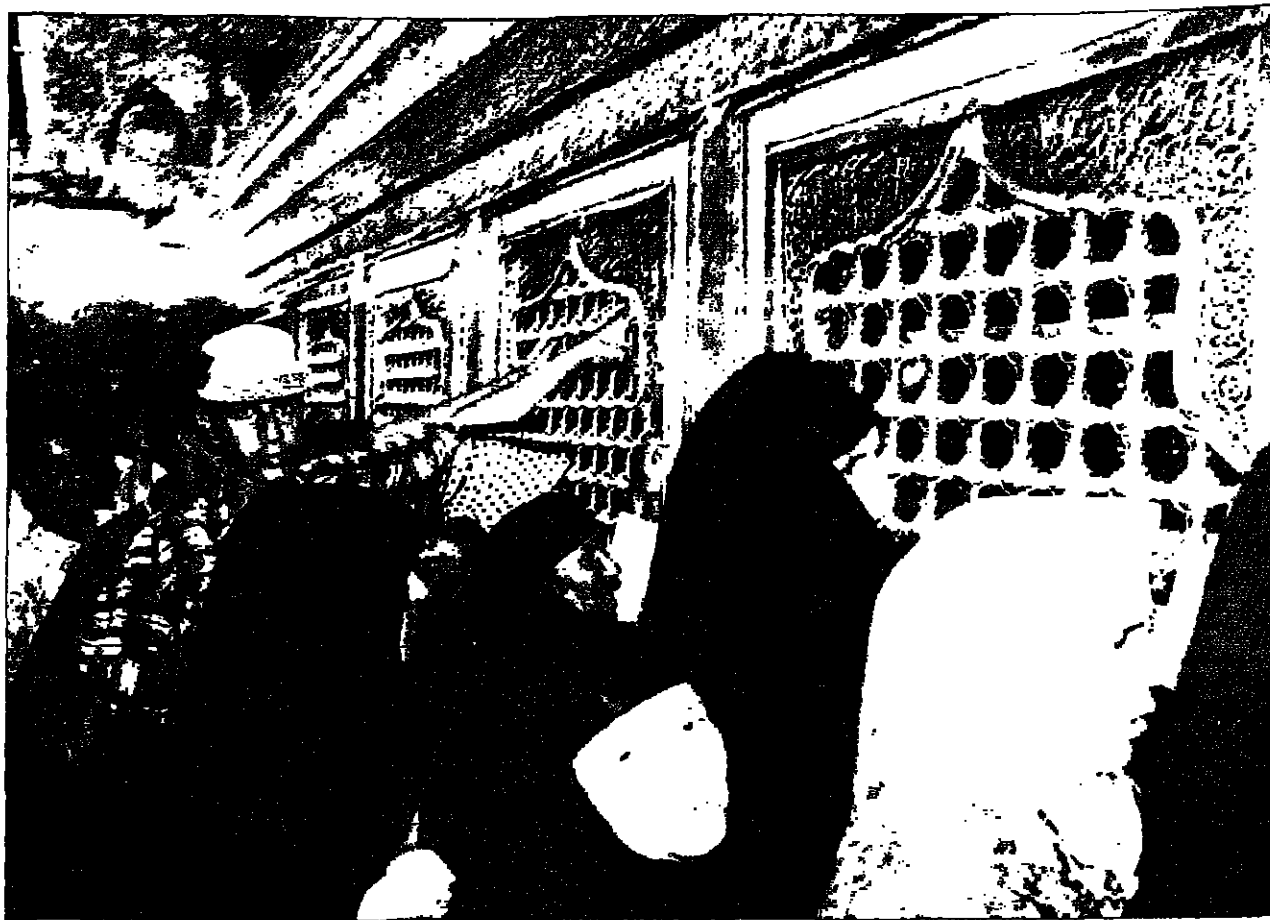
"Everybody benefited except the Iraqi people even though it was reached with the aim of easing the Iraqi people's suffering... The deliberate delays have allowed America to turn a temporary step into a step which lasts for years," he added.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said on Friday Iraq's decision to stop oil sales showed President Saddam Hussein's indifference to the suffering of his people (See story on page 12)

"He is in no position to point a finger at anyone else in the world for the suffering of his own people," Mr. Clinton said. But Iraq's influential Babel newspaper, owned by President Hussein's eldest son Uday, said Iraq would not be told what to do with its own resources.

"The U.N. Security Council is behaving like a prince who hands out what does not belong to him," Babel said.

"Iraq's decision to stop oil exports is a just and legitimate decision and is a response to changing of the [oil-for-food] memorandum into a political weapon against the Iraqi people," it said in a front-page



PRAYING TO END SIEGE: Iraqi pilgrims Saturday visit the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, 100 kilometres from Baghdad. Believers visit the site to implore the Imam, who was the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, to help lift United Nations sanctions which are in effect since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (Reuters photo)

30 European medical firms vying for oil-for-food deal contracts

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Thirty medical equipment firms from Britain, France and Germany are exhibiting in Baghdad in a bid to win contracts under the U.N. oil-for-food deal.

Iraqi health ministry official Khaled Jamil welcomed the opening of the exhibition Saturday, adding that Iraq needed the equipment badly because "the health situation had deteriorated."

He criticised the slow delivery of medical equipment under the oil-for-food deal, which allows Iraq to export \$2 billion of oil over six months to pay for imports of food and medicine.

Mr. Jamil said more than half the equipment ordered still remained undelivered from the first six-month phase from December to June this year.

Iraq stopped pumping oil Friday through a Turkish pipeline which is its main export route in protest at slow authorisation of import contracts by the United Nations.

With backing from France and Russia, Baghdad had argued for the deal to be amended so that permitted imports of food and medicines were made in the same six-month period as the oil exports designed to pay for them.

But under U.S. and British pressure, the U.N. Security Council late Thursday extended the deal for a third six-month period without amendment.

Under the deal, Iraq has to submit each import contract to the U.N. secretary general's office for verification that it is indeed for humanitarian supplies and it accuses the U.S. and Britain of deliberately delaying the authorisations.

Hamas urges continued struggle against Israel

AMMAN (AP) — On the 10th anniversary of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, the Hamas movement on Saturday urged Palestinians to continue their struggle against Israel.

"Hamas appeals to all Palestinian forces inside the territories and in the diaspora to unite their ranks in confronting the [Israeli] enemy," Hamas said in a statement signed by its Amman-based spokesman, Ibrahim Ghosheh.

It urged Palestinians to "stand firmly against all conspiracies targeting the land of Palestine, all of Palestine, and Jerusalem, all of Jerusalem."

It also called for "eliminating collaborators" with Israel and "keeping the gun directed towards the Zionist enemy."

The statement urged the "Arab and Islamic

nations... to cease their apathy and to stand firmly and sincerely with Palestinian strugglers and detainees."

The harshly-worded statement coincides with the anniversary of the Palestinian uprising that broke out in December 1987 against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The uprising ended after the signing of a 1993 agreement under which Israel gave the Palestinians limited self-rule.

Hamas, which rejects peace with Israel, has claimed responsibility for scores of attacks against Israel in the past few years.

In the statement, Hamas said the deadlocked peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians "has led to the deterioration of the so-called 'peace' in all aspects."

Alleged assassin of prime minister goes on trial in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — The trial of a former Christian warlord accused of killing a Lebanese prime minister began Friday, the first murder of a cabinet-ranking official to come to court.

The ex-leader of the Lebanese Forces militia, Samir Geagea, is charged with instigating the assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami, a pro-Syrian Sunni Muslim, on June 1, 1987.

The trial is expected to revive aspects of the 1975-90 civil war that many Lebanese people, Christians as well as Muslims, would prefer to forget.

Karami was killed when a bomb exploded on an army helicopter carrying him from his hometown of Tripoli in northern Lebanon to Beirut.

Geagea, 45, who is already serving three life terms for murdering two rival Christian politicians and attempting to kill a third, looked thin and feeble when he arrived at court, guarded by four armed soldiers.

He and 15 alleged accomplices, including Brig. Gen. Khalil Matar, have denied the charges. Only Geagea, Brig. Gen. Matar and three others are in custody. The 11 others are fugitives and are being tried in absentia.

Karami's brother, Omar, also a former prime minister, was among family members at the opening session. Friday's proceedings were largely taken up by readings of the charges, approval of lawyers for both sides and other formalities.

In Christian parts of Lebanon, there is sympathy on the streets for Dr. Geagea because he is the only person to be prosecuted so far for the killings of Lebanon's statesmen.

Two presidents, who by Lebanon's constitution are always Christians, were assassinated by bombs during the war: Bashir Gemayel in 1982 and Rene Mouawad in 1989.

A pro-Syrian Lebanese nationalist was detained in connection with Gemayel's assassination, but escaped in 1990. Nobody has been arrested for Mouawad's killing.

The Maronite Christian patriarch, Nasrallah Sfeir, has previously said it was unfair for Geagea to be prosecuted when other warlords go free.

Some leaders of militia have become cabinet ministers and members of parliament in Lebanon's post-war system.

Geagea has said his trials were politically motivated because of his opposition to the government. The authorities have replied that his prosecutions are based on criminal evidence.

Groups in U.S. lobby against Middle East peace efforts

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to further complicate peace efforts in the Middle East, groups in the U.S. Congress and elsewhere opposed to the peace process are lobbying to pass legislation that would ban any American dealings with Syria, according to a prominent Arab-American leader.

Khalil Jahshan, president of the Washington-based National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA), told the Jordan Times that the same groups are also trying to pass legislation barring an American military presence in the Golan Heights, if a peace settlement is reached between Israel and Syria, which is on the American administration's list of states that sponsor terrorism.

Some Israeli Labour leaders have advocated a gradual return of the Golan Heights, occupied in 1967, on the condition that the area become a demilitarised zone with American and international

military monitors. "Both pieces of legislation have enough potential votes in Congress to be passed," Mr. Jahshan said after giving a lecture on U.S. policies in the Middle East at the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies.

He told the audience that the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), traditionally the most influential pro-Israel lobby group in the U.S., has weakened in the past few years, leaving a vacuum for an alternative Middle East lobbying presence.

The NAAA, beset by internal divisions and lack of external funding, was unable to fill the void, giving a free hand to right-wing Republican and Jewish groups.

Over the past few years, these groups have introduced legislation in the Republican-dominated Congress aimed at sabotaging the fragile, six-year-old Middle East peace process.

Mr. Jahshan explained that the administration of U.S. President

Bill Clinton, a Democrat, is suffering from "lack of leadership and resolve... which has created a vacuum" on both the domestic and international levels.

This, he claimed, allowed Congress, dominated by a pro-Israeli lobby, to assume a greater role in policy-making.

He characterised American policy in the Middle East as "incoherent" with "contradictory and irreconcilable" interests. He said it showed "little or no change vis-à-vis new realities in the region."

Washington, he said, has committed a strategic mistake by subjugating its own policies to Middle East issues to Arab-Israeli normalisation of ties.

This has become the Clinton administration's primary objective in the region "to the detriment of its other interests," such as maintaining relations with friendly Arab regimes.

Although President Clinton has personally been very receptive to Arab-Americans, U.S. policy towards Arab countries has

become one of "neglect," he said, adding that "the U.S. is seeing everything through an Israeli prism."

Due to this, "a clash with the Arab World is inevitable, unless both sides take action," Mr. Jahshan predicted based on his assessment after meeting over 45 Arab officials on his recent tour of the region.

According to Mr. Jahshan, Washington and the Arab states need a "reality check." Bilateral U.S.-Arab ties should be based on a "strategic partnership, with Arab countries" occasionally saying "No" to U.S. demands.

The NAAA has been campaigning for a new peace conference along the lines of the Middle East peace summit held in Madrid in 1991. The new meeting should look at "changing realities" in the region, brought about by the election of Israel's hardline Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli signing of peace accords with the PLO and Jordan.

The proposed conference should re-establish some of the basic principles of Arab-Israeli peace making — U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, which call for the exchange of land for peace.

While the Europeans have shown enthusiasm for the idea, the American administration has flatly refused it, said Mr. Jahshan.

He called on Arab leaders to take the initiative and present their own peace proposal.

The NAAA, representing members who originate from 22 Arab countries, is "weakened by diversity and narrow interests" since it has to concentrate on the interests of each individual state vis-à-vis its relations with Washington, said Mr. Jahshan.

"This has made it more difficult for the NAAA to act collectively," he stated, adding that the peace process further increased divisions within the NAAA.

According to Mr. Jahshan, there are around three million Arab-Americans, two-thirds of whom are American-born while the rest are immigrants.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 The Pink Panther
14:30 Jonny Quest
15:00 Energy Express
15:30 American Chart Show
16:30 Tarzan
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Kate and Allie
20:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Doc — Renegade
21:10 Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 North and South
23:15 The Jewel in the Crown

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 Fajr
06:18 (Sunrise) Duha
11:27 Dhuhur
14:13 Asr
16:36 Maghreb
17:58 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
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St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622966
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Warm weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming relatively cool at night with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate to active. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.
Min/Max temp. 08/22

Agaba 10/24
Deserts 04/23
Jordan Valley 10/24

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 20, Agaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 28 per cent, Agaba 42 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 750200
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894738
Dr. Salman Daboubi 776781
Dr. Khalid Abdo 857129
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nareush pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 626730
Yacoub pharmacy 649445
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRRID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 250790
Al Quds pharmacy ()
ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989601
Khalil pharmacy 985341

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 1021111, 637777
Fire Brigade 671701
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 757111
Telephone Information directory assistance 121
Overseas Calls 1010299
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Akshaf Tel. Repairs 661001
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680104
Electricity Authority 813615
Electric Power Co. 636381
RJ Flight Information 10853200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 0853200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husein Medical Centre 813818/2

Khalil Maternity 644281/6
Akshaf Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642962
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdallah 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Akshaf 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 099833/23
Zarqa National Hospital 099905/60
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 099906/900
IRRID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02375555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02372275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital 02347100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532005, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 081527001

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05 Jarmaca (RJ)
08:25 Bombay (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:00 Madrid (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 Paris (RJ)
17:45 London (RJ)
18:05 Athens (RJ)
18:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
19:40 Rome (RJ)
19:40 Vienna (RJ)
00:05 Cairo (RJ)

20:50 Jeddah (RJ)

21:30 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

22:30 Jakarta, Bangkok (RJ)

22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

23:00 Jakarta (RJ)

23:59 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

03:00 Athens (OA)

04:20 Rome (AZ)

06:15 Beirut (ME)

06:40 Beirut, London (BA)

07:50 London (BA)

11:00 Sanaa (Y)

13:15 Doha (GF)

14:50 Moscow (SU)

15:55 Doha (QR)

19:15 Jeddah (SV)

21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)

21:40 Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:20 Beirut (RJ)

08:40 Frankfurt (RJ)

10:15 Agaba, London (RJ)

11:05 Vienna (RJ)

11:40 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)

11:50 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

12:20 Athens (RJ)

20:10 Cairo (RJ)

20:30 New Delhi (RJ)

20:40 Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights

03:25 Rome (AZ)

10:00 Sanaa (Y)

Home

Prince Faisal

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Faisal Saturday announced plans for a proposed traffic institute by the Public Security Department (PSD) and called on all concerned institutions to support the institute.

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Prince Faisal reviews plans for traffic institute

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Faisal Saturday reviewed plans for a proposed traffic institute by the Public Security Department (PSD) and called on all concerned organisations to support the PSD's efforts to establish the institute.

The institute is a major national project since it will dedicate its efforts to traffic issues, said the Prince at a meeting with

PSD Director Nasouh Muhieddin.

Preliminary work is currently being focused on drawing up the institute's programmes and setting its objectives, Prince Faisal noted.

The plans entail training qualified personnel for the institute and making available the administrative and technical requirements for the institute, he added.

Prince Faisal also under-

lined the importance of establishing a higher council on road safety, describing it as a tool for formulating general policies connected with public safety.

Lt. Gen. Muhieddin said his department has appropriated a plot of land to set up the projected institute and its necessary facilities. He told Prince Faisal that the institute will have to be built in stages due to the lack of sufficient funds.

The projected higher council on traffic safety will draw up laws and regulations and work out a general strategy for the institute's activities, he said.

The PSD has already created a unit to conduct studies on the traffic situation in Jordan and traffic problems and possible solutions, and has also worked out syllabi on traffic rules for school students.

Crown Prince honours winning athletes from Tehran competition

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Saturday voiced both his desire and that of His Majesty King Hussein to support Jordanian athletes and provide them with the necessary requirements to enable them to participate fully in sports competitions.

At a ceremony honouring the Jordanian athletes who won ten medals at the Southwest Asian Games, which were held recently in Tehran, the Crown Prince said: "We have to respond to the aspirations of the

youth, who have more than once held high Jordan's standard on different sports occasions."

"We must work out an immediate plan designed to provide for the basic requirements of athletes in various sports federations and we have to open sports facilities so that they can train," he added.

Noting that the sports facilities in Jordan have not yet been fully utilised due to lack of coordination, Prince Hassan said if coaches are made available

and enough time and equipment given to them for training, the obstacles should be overcome.

"Sports achievements require effort, dedication, and commitment, as well as dealing with other teams," he stated.

Prince Hassan asked the sports federation to draw up a list of basic needs.

Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein expressed his appreciation for the King and Prince Hassan's support for Jordanian athletes. He added

that the honours won in Tehran will give these athletes further incentive to pursue their efforts and achieve further successes.

Dr. Abu Ein presented Prince Hassan with a cup that the Jordanian athletes won in the Southwest Asian Games as a gift to the King. Prince Hassan welcomed the athletes and their coaches home and congratulated them on their success.

In ten days of competition, Jordan won two gold, four silver, and four bronze medals.



SROUR RECEIVES IRAQI OFFICIAL: Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Srouer Saturday receives Iraqi National Council head Sa'don Hammadi and reviews coordination and cooperation between the Jordanian and Iraqi parliaments (Petra photo)

Alliance wins large majority in JEA elections

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Islamists and their leftist and pan-Arabist allies scored massive gains in this week's two rounds of elections for seven branches in the 38,000-strong Jordan Engineers Association (JEA), unionists said Saturday.

The Common Agenda candidates won 44 of the 49 seats, according to results released late Friday.

The rest went to three independents and two Green List candidates in elections that were held on Wednesday and Friday.

Elections for the JEA president, deputy, and board are set for February.

The Islamists (the White list) and leftist and pan-Arabist parties and individuals (the Green list) put aside their historical and ideological differences before the ballot and formed the Common Agenda to pool resources and confront government plans to change laws governing the 12-member professional unions, together grouping over 80,000 members.

Those from the Green list who refused to join the new bloc ran under the same name.

"The aim of the Common Agenda was gathering the greatest number of engineers to participate in the elections to work together on common ground regarding national and professional issues," Azam Huneidi, spokesman for the White list, told the Jordan Times.

Islamists have long dominated the professional unions, a hotbed of political activism during a 1957-1990 ban on parties.

The associations have been at the forefront of efforts to battle normalisation with Israel after Jordan signed a peace treaty with the Jewish state in 1994. On many occasions they have expelled members who had contacts with Israel.

His Majesty King Hussein promised Parliament last week that a new professional unions law would be introduced as part of a wider package of regulations to help modernise Jordan's political drive.

The government has remained tight-lipped on the planned amendments, but unionists expect changes to the structure of their bodies aimed at "de-politicising them and restricting their role to professional concerns."

Others have said they believe that membership in these associations, now obligatory, will become voluntary.

Mr. Huneidi said professional associations have a crucial role in the national economy and development and "any attempt to downsize their role will only reflect negatively on the country."

In another development, female engineers lost their bid for seats in the architectural branch, apparently because of poor voter turnout Friday.

It was not immediately clear how many members took part in the elections, but nationalist Abdul Rahman Bitar told the Jordan Times that "only five to seven thousand of the 38,000 JEA members actually go to the polls and vote."

Cabinet briefed on Majali's Ramallah visit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Saturday briefed the Council of Ministers on the outcome of his visit last week to Ramallah in the West Bank and his meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and senior officials of the Palestinian National Authority.

During his visit, Dr. Majali discussed the deadlocked Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations and delivered a message to Mr. Arafat from His Majesty King Hussein about Jordan's support for the Palestinian leadership's endeavours.

According to Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi, the council studied the King's message sent to the prime minister last Thursday and discussed a draft reply from the prime minister to the King.

Speaking after the regular Cabinet session, Dr. Mutawi said the King's message to Dr. Majali clarified Jordan's position with regard to the peace process, particularly issues that are of concern to the Palestinian side, and dismissed the groundless reports in Israeli newspapers on the King's stand vis-à-vis the Palestine issue.

Jordan is exercising active diplomatic contacts in support of the Palestinian people in their negotiations with the Israelis, he said, adding that the King's message to the prime minister coincided with intensive efforts at the regional and international levels to give impetus to the peace process.

Dr. Majali sent a note to Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Srouer requesting that the King's Speech from the

Throne, delivered to the 13th Parliament last week, be considered as the government's statement of policy and asked that a date be set for Parliament to debate it according to the minister.

During the Cabinet meeting, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji presented a briefing on his visit to the Egyptian town of Luxor, which he said was meant to offer moral support for the Egyptian tourism sector.

His visit at the head of the delegation was deeply appreciated by the Egyptian government, he said.

Mr. Biltaji stated that Jordan's tourism sector has not been adversely affected by the massacre of tourists in Luxor last month.

The Cabinet approved an agreement between Jordan and Israel on industrial zones signed during the Middle East

and North Africa economic meeting in Doha, and gave its consent to Jordan's participation in a number of international tourism fairs due to be held in Madrid, Milan, and Berlin on Jan. 1, 1998, March 25, 1998, and March 7, 1998, respectively.

The Cabinet also approved the formation of Jordan's delegation to participate in a ministerial conference on health, the environment, and development due to be held in Damascus on Dec. 8 and formed a delegation from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to take part in a workshop on water to be held in France on Dec. 21, according to Dr. Mutawi.

The establishment of a regional bureau for the Arab-African Parliamentary Forum in Amman to deal with population and development issues was also approved.

College administration dismisses, expels leaders of student strike

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The administration of Amman Polytechnic Faculty has handed down a number of expulsions and dismissals to students as punishment for their parts in leading an eight-day strike to press the management to improve college services, according to Faculty Chairperson Khalid Touqan Saturday.

"The decision to expel these students was in line with the our regulations for their violation of the university rules," Dr. Touqan said.

The student were forced to end their strike last Tuesday when anti-riot police surrounded the faculty gate to prevent them from continuing their protest.

The administration subsequently launched an investigation to determine the students responsible for the

strike, which paralysed the college, a subsidiary of Balqa Applied Sciences University, for eight days.

Dr. Touqan told the Jordan Times that four students, Khaled Abu Farah, Malik Fayiz, Naser Jweilis, and Shadi Affif, were served final expulsions. Wisam Laham and Sharaf Abu Shareem were given one-year dismissals and Mohammad Rafeeq and Firas Halaweh were served six-month dismissals from the college.

Dr. Touqan said nine other students were served "final warning" for their involvement in the strike.

He said the students can appeal the decision through "the regulations of the university." He did not elaborate.

During the protest, which started on Nov. 25, the students called for improving faculty services, including hiring a resident doctor, estab-

lishing a medical clinic, and allowing students to form a students council.

Umm Wisam, the mother of Wisam Laham, described the decision as "unjustified" and said the expulsions and dismissals were not only directed at the students "but also at their father and mothers."

The families of these students have informed Lower House members Hamadah Fara'aneh and Birjis Hadeed of the faculty's action and have requested that they intervene to reverse the decisions, she said.

She added that she will write to His Majesty King Hussein seeking his help to solve the "plight" of the students.

Mr. Fara'aneh told the Jordan Times that during the strike, the students requested that he work as a "mediator" with the faculty management. "While the students were

flexible, the university chairman, unfortunately, was adamant and refused any mediation from outside the campus," Mr. Fara'aneh said.

Dr. Touqan declined to comment on Mr. Fara'aneh statements.

The deputy stated that he will direct a question to Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Musri during today's Parliament session.

Meanwhile, a statement by the founding General Union of Jordan Students criticised Balqa University's decision to expel their colleagues and demanded the return of all students to their classes.

The two-page statement, which was made available to the Jordan Times, denounced what they described as "the unnecessary interference of security agents in the affairs of the college."

Micro enterprise seminar ends with general guidelines

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A three-day regional seminar on micro and small enterprise promotion for women in the Arab region concluded here last week with a general guideline for work.

Representatives of eleven Arab countries attended this event, which focused on the participation of the private sector, labour organisations, and governments. The Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), which co-organised this event with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), added a fourth partner to the representation with the presence of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Participants agreed to exchange experiences in training, marketing, and production relating to small enterprises at the regional level.

Finally, the seminar extended an invitation to international organisations to take on the responsibility of following up the results of this meeting in a continuous and sustainable manner to integrate Arab women in economic development.

The deliberations of this seminar will be compiled in one document in collaboration with the NHF and the ILO.

The general guideline generated from this meeting pertains to studying means of establishing an Arab regional mechanism in cooperation with international organisations as a follow-up to this meeting.

It was found that there was a need to supplement existing information networks dealing with these types of projects for Arab women based on strong national information. It was noted that a proper environment to encourage women to invest in micro and small enterprises was essential to the success of these projects.

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Information technology workshop opens Monday

AMMAN (J.T.) — The concept of using information technology as a tool to promote economic development will be introduced at a national workshop under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan beginning Dec. 8, according to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) press release.

Organised by the National Information Centre with funding from the UNDP, the two-day workshop will gather government officials, the private sector, research institutions, and other interested organisations to address the double challenge of globalisation and the information revolution, the statement continued.

The workshop is part of an initiative launched by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States to trigger consultations on the issue and develop a comprehensive programme of investment and technical assistance to promote cyber-economy, the announcement said.

Cyber-economy refers to an economy in which value is created predominantly by skillful management of information and in which knowledge-based industries domi-

nate the gross domestic product. In order to compete in the global market, three factors are considered necessary for an economy to convert into a cyber economy — the availability of information technology, a sound and open economy, and a highly-skilled workforce, according to the statement.

Although Arab countries have been investing in education and training as well as liberalising their economies, one of the obstacles they continue to face is the limited Internet access and insufficient number of telephone lines for the population at large, the statement read.

The ultimate objective of this cyber-economy programme is to create an Arab workforce that can function and benefit from opportunities created by the cyber-economy. According to UNDP, this would mean raising the standards of training and education in Arab countries, allowing information technology to permeate all sectors of Arab economy and society, and providing high-quality telecommunication services, the announcement concluded.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King, Crown Prince send cables to Muslim cleric in Lebanon

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan have sent cables to the president of the Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council in Lebanon, Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Shamseddin, congratulating him on his safety following an attempt on his life while praying at a mosque in southern Beirut.

In his cable, the King denounced the attempt and expressed his happiness for the safety of the Muslim cleric and his hope that Sheikh Shamseddin will pursue his efforts to serve the Lebanese community and Muslims at large.

Prince Hassan sent a similar cable to Sheikh Shamseddin condemning the

attack, in which the Muslim leader sustained injuries when he was shot at inside the mosque by an unknown assailant, who escaped.

The sheikh's bodyguard was reportedly injured in Thursday evening's attack.

JDS.5 million in seized drugs destroyed

AMMAN (Petra) — Teams from the Public Security and the Anti-Narcotics Departments destroyed a quantity of heroin, hashish, opium, and pills worth JD5.5 million at Fuhais Cement Factories Company last week.

The quantity, which had been seized recently, included 26 kilograms of heroin, 175 kilograms of hashish, 7.5 kilograms of opium, and 1,595,730 pills.

CHRISTMAS CHOIR

* Annual YWCA Christmas classical choir at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

"El Amor Brujo" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

PLAY

"The Moment" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre, at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (until Dec. 11).

EXHIBITIONS

* Plastic (abstract) art by Mohammad Qaddumi at the Royal Cultural Centre, until

Dec. 7.

* Works by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 10.

* Paintings by Ammar Khammash at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 12.

* Exhibitions of paintings by Algerian artist Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

Negotiators pin hopes on ministers for U.N. climate talks

KYOTO, Japan (AFP) — Negotiators from 159 nations pinned their hopes Saturday on the arrival of ministers and U.S. Vice President Al Gore to punch through a deadlock at U.N. global climate talks in Japan.

Officials huddled in back-rooms to set out on paper the litany of disputes that have delayed progress since the 10-day conference began in Kyoto on Dec. 1.

Cracks have spread among the nations ahead of the critical ministerial stage of negotiations starting Monday which seeks to clamp legally-binding cuts on developed countries' greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Gore, due to fly in for just one day Monday, would back the U.S. proposal already on the table, said White House environmental official Derrick Forrester.

"He is coming to reinforce the strength of the proposal that we have made," Mr. Forrester told AFP, adding the debate here "still feels very fluid."

U.S. President Bill Clinton and European Union leaders worked in Washington Friday to rescue the Kyoto talks but both sides were far apart over how best to cut gases and involve developing nations.

In a joint statement issued after the trans-Atlantic talks, the two sides said they would "work vigorously together with other nations over the next week to bring the Kyoto negotiations ... to a successful conclusion."

Developing nations are fuming at demands first raised by the United States they make commitments in Kyoto while the Europe Union is pitted against the United States over how far to cut emissions.

"There is a lot of work going on on a lot of fronts and it's all happening in dark rooms all around this building but I think there is a very good spirit that it can

be done," said Australia's lead official Meg McDonald.

She expected no major development on key issues such as how far to cut output of greenhouse gases blamed for trapping the earth's heat until after European ministers meet Sunday.

"That is obviously the big key to them getting a negotiating mandate," Ms. McDonald said.

One European diplomat

U.S. lawmaker cites foreign policy in climate deal

WASHINGTON (R) — Congress would oppose a climate change treaty if it allowed "rogue nations" to benefit from emissions trading schemes or joint projects with industrialised countries, a leading U.S. lawmaker said Friday.

Chairman of the House Of Representatives International Relations Committee, Rep. Benjamin Gilman, told President Bill Clinton in a letter that "to withstand scrutiny from Congress, any proposed international emissions trading system must exclude any country now under a U.N.-mandated embargo."

Mr. Gilman, a New York Republican, also said a trading system must allow participating countries to prevent "windfall benefits" from going to countries that are subject to import or export restrictions.

Representatives of some 160 nations are holding final talks set to end next week in Kyoto, Japan, on a deal to reduce the world's emissions of heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels.

In those talks, the Clinton administration is pushing a system under which countries that reduce their emissions below a set cap would have the right to sell credits for that surplus reduction to other countries.

The administration also wants a programme called "joint implementation" in which industrialised countries would get credit for projects that reduce emissions from developing countries.

"I am sure you would agree that the United States would not wish to participate in any arrangement that would create foreign aid and technology assistance programmes that would benefit rogue states such as Iran, Cuba and North Korea," Mr. Gilman wrote to Mr. Clinton.

Mr. Gilman also said "the concerns of Congress are clear regarding the need for developing countries to adhere to the same targets and timetables" for emissions reduction as industrialised countries.

The Senate last summer unanimously passed a resolution saying developing countries should have to take steps to curb emissions within the same time frame as industrialised countries under the treaty. But the resolution was worded ambiguously, and lawmakers are divided on its meaning.

The climate change treaty would be subject to ratification by the Senate, and the full Congress likely would need to approve a variety of legislation to implement the treaty.

said EU officials were hammering out positions on emission cuts, variable targets, the participation of developing countries and the inclusion of greenhouse gas-absorbing objects such as trees.

He doubted European ministers would manage to decide swiftly on the long list of unresolved issues.

Cedric Philibert, negotiator on the French delegation, said he had seen no move-

ment in negotiations from the United States, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

"I am rather pessimistic," he said.

New Zealand's lead official Darryl Dunn unleashed fury the previous day by proposing that once developed nations had made their commitment, developing countries would have to shoulder some of the burden.

Nations outside the developed world that were able to do so should agree by 2002 at the latest to implement "binding quantified emission limitations" from 2015, he said.

"No, no, no," thundered Beijing's lead negotiator Zhong Shukong in response.

"In the developed world only two people ride in a car and yet you want us to give up riding a bus," he complained.

There was no sign of a thaw in the icy refusal of developing countries Saturday. A Tanzanian diplomat entering a meeting of developing nations and China said the matter was "concluded" the previous day.

Taking 1990 greenhouse gas emissions as a base, Europe is calling for a 15 per cent cut by 2010, Japan for a five per cent cut between 2008 and 2012 and the United States for no change between 2008 and 2012.

But each offer has a different underlying base.

The United States, for example, includes six greenhouse gases in its proposal while Europe and Japan include only three — yet another source of disagreement that must be resolved.

According to U.N. estimates, current emission trends are likely to cause average global temperatures to rise 1.0 to 3.5 degrees Celsius over the next 100 years.

The ITAR-TASS agency quoted local civil defence officials as saying that the Antonov hit a children's home and destroyed two



A Russian cargo plane, the Antonov-124 'Ruslan' carrying two fighter jets, crashed shortly after taking off from a military airfield onto the streets of the Siberian town of Irkutsk on Dec. 6. 46 victims included two crews and 30 passengers have been confirmed dead in the crash. The Russian Interfax news agency, quoting preliminary unofficial figures, said the final death toll could be as high as 150 (Reuters photo)

150 feared dead in Siberia air crash

MOSCOW (AFP) — A Russian airforce cargo plane crashed into the Siberian city of Irkutsk Saturday, killing scores of people and causing a huge fire which was still raging hours later.

An early official death toll counted only the 46 people on board the huge Antonov An-124 aircraft, comprising 30 passengers and 16 crew members.

However an unnamed member of an investigation commission into the crash told the Interfax news agency that up to 100 civilians may have been killed on the ground and another 100 may have been injured.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin had called an urgent meeting in the Kremlin to handle the disaster and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin had sent his condolences to the victims' relatives.

The federal aviation service, quoted by ITAR-TASS, said the plane crashed at 0652 GMT, eight minutes after take-off, and was carrying two Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets.

Interfax, quoting defence ministry officials, said that the aeroplane crashed into a four-storey apartment block 1.5 kilometres from the runway.

Weather conditions were said to be fair at the time.

The Antonov's "black boxes", or flight recorders, were recovered at the scene, Interfax said.

The aeroplane was flying from Irkutsk to Vladivostok in the far east of Russia before going on to deliver the two fighter jets to Vietnam.

The defence ministry appointed a commission headed by Minister for Emergencies Sergey Shoigu to investigate the crash and airforce chief Pyotr Deinekin went to the district, which houses workers at the city's aircraft factory.

Experts put forward three hypotheses for the crash: that the Antonov had been overloaded, that somehow the plane had lost its equilibrium, or that it had used an incorrect take-off trajectory.

Red Cross returns 110 bodies as Sri Lanka counts the dead

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lankan troops Saturday received the bodies of 110 colleagues killed by Tamil Tiger rebels during a battle for a key highway that is claiming thousands of casualties on both sides, officials said.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) captured the bodies of the soldiers during ferocious battles over a strategic land route in the north of the country Thursday.

The rebels later gave the bodies to the International Committee of the Red Cross which operates as a neutral conduit between the two sides in embattled areas.

"We have given over to the military authorities in the northern town of Vavuniya the bodies of 110 personnel we received from the LTTE," ICRC spokesman Harsha Gunawardena said.

The defence ministry in a statement confirmed that they received the bodies from the LTTE but said they were trying to establish the identity of the victims to ensure that they were in fact government soldiers.

The troops were killed when the LTTE launched a massive counter-offensive Thursday to stall a two-pronged military push into territory they hold in northern Sri Lanka, causing heavy casualties on both sides.

In a statement sent here from their London office, the LTTE said they killed a total of 300 government soldiers and the bodies of 133 of them were captured.

Some of the bodies were cremated, the LTTE said.

Rebel deaths were placed at 35, including 10 women, but the defence ministry rejected the LTTE's claims and said guerrilla casualties were "very large."

The ministry said the Tigers gave the names of 102 of their cadres killed over their internal radio communications.

The ministry statement said troops had recovered 36 bodies of government soldiers killed in Thursday's fighting in addition to the 110 bodies they received through the ICRC.

Defence sources said security forces lost at least 148 soldiers, mostly from the elite Special Forces commando unit, and speculated the LTTE suffered an equal number of losses despite rebel claims to the contrary.

Defence sources said that there had been intense hand-to-hand battles. Aircraft were ineffective because of heavy rains and the natural cover provided by large trees in the jungle terrain.

The ministry said fighting erupted when troops advanced into LTTE territory as part of an offensive to open the

"A-9" highway to Jaffna. Security forces wrested control of Jaffna in December 1995 but the land route remains under rebel control.

Thursday's fierce attack was the fourth major counter-offensive launched by the LTTE since security forces mounted their offensive, code-named "Sure Victory," nearly seven months ago to open the 76-kilometre highway.

Official figures show that about 950 soldiers have been killed since the Sure Victory offensive began. The government says more than 2,500 rebels have been killed by the military, a claim denied by the rebels.

The fighting has claimed heavy casualties on both sides but little damage to property, as civilians left the area long before the fighting began and the battle is taking place deep inside jungle areas.

Two weeks ago the defence ministry said its forces had covered two-thirds of their objective and had only 20 kilometres to go.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a campaign for independence in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. More than 50,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 25 years.

Cuba deports Berlin film festival official

BERLIN (AFP) — Cuban authorities arrested and later deported Peter Schumann, an official of the annual Berlin film festival, when he arrived in Havana, festival organisers said in a statement.

Mr. Schumann, a film critic who has worked for many years for the Berlinale's International Forum section, has repeatedly criticised Cuban leaders for human rights abuses in the country.

He arrived in Havana Sunday to attend the Dec. 12-12 Latin American film festival in the Cuban capital, but was immediately arrested and taken to an interior ministry prison.

Cuban authorities said he violated a two-year immigration ban but Berlinale officials said Mr. Schumann had never been told he was persona non grata in Cuba.

Mr. Schumann was not allowed to contact the German embassy and was deported Tuesday.

A Latin American film expert, Mr. Schumann helped promote Cuban films including the world-wide box-office hit "Fresa y Chocolate," which won a Silver Bear award at the Berlin film festival.

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First Korean peace talks session has 'symbolic' importance

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The opening next week of talks on a peace treaty formally ending the 1950-53 Korean war has symbolic importance but won't likely achieve any breakthroughs, a senior U.S. official said Friday.

The official, who spoke on condition that he not be named, also said Washington had no plans for a bilateral meeting alongside the Geneva talks among the two Koreas, China, and the United States.

"I would say that my own expectations for this first meeting are somewhat modest in terms of substance," the official said. "We are having the meeting and that itself has a great deal of symbolic importance."

"It was not an easy thing for the North Korean side to agree to," he added. "I think it will be quite some time before we can actually see real results."

His characterisation was consistent with that of senior North Korean and Chinese diplomats.

All sides expect this first session of formal negotiations to be broad and general, focused on reducing tensions between the arch-rival Koreas and on replacing the U.N.

armistice with a permanent peace regime.

"I would hope that we could move fairly promptly on to reasonable and practical measures that will be relevant to that agenda," the official said.

He also downplayed Pyongyang's insistence on discussing the disposition of some 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea, saying the subject could be raised in the context of a much broader discussion.

Negotiators from all four countries are to sit down early Tuesday in Geneva for two days of talks.

Leading the delegations are U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth, South Korea's Ambassador to Paris Lee Sec-Young, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-Gwan, and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

The U.S. official also suggested South Korea's economic woes may have less of a negative effect on the talks than analysts here have suggested.

Seoul's massive IMF bailout may instead have heightened Pyongyang's awareness that it has no access to such enormous aid to alleviate its own severe economic troubles.

he said.

The United States and South Korea first proposed holding "four-party" peace talks in April 1996, to comprise the two Koreas and the countries that backed them in their fratricidal war.

Washington wants above all to minimise any risk to its troops, particularly as it sees Pyongyang facing increasingly dire food shortages and severe economic strains.

North Korea, for its part, aims to improve its relations with the United States, which has maintained a tough embargo against Pyongyang since Korean War fighting erupted in 1950, analysts say.

It also wants food aid to alleviate shortages plaguing the country since 1995. Both Washington and Seoul are expected to substantially increase their food aid contributions in the coming year.

By offering incremental help, U.S. officials clearly hope to lure North Korea out of its international isolation, while ensuring that it adheres to a 1994 deal freezing Pyongyang's suspected nuclear weapons programme.

Sierra Leone boasts some of the finest diamond deposits in the world.

"We would from now on brook no nonsense and defaulters of the law governing mining will be severely dealt with," he said.

The rising trend in smuggling of precious gems by unscrupulous businessmen with the help of ill-motivated public officials will no longer be tolerated," he added.

Mr. Thomas said miners would have to take out licences and that monitors from his ministry and the Government Gold and Diamond Office would be sent to mining areas.

"That's rather like sending the cat to guard the cream," one mining analyst told AFP.

Sierra Leone junta clamps down on illicit diamond mining

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's junta Saturday warned illegal diamond miners in the east of the country to comply with mining codes and lifted a largely ignored ban on mining activity.

The government is totally annoyed with the manner and way diamond mining operations have been going on. Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources Captain Paul Thomas announced after visiting the eastern mining area of Kono.

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Cyclone Pam forms over Cook Islands

RAROTONGA (AFP) — The Cook Islands was Saturday facing its third cyclone in just over a month.

Officials declared Cyclone Pam was 225 kilometres southwest of the northern atoll of Rakahanga and was moving south-southeast and

slowly intensifying.

A gale warning was in force for the northern Cooks group including cyclone devastated Manihiki which was hit by Cyclone Martin at the beginning of November.

Police Commissioner Tevai Matapo said Pam was moving at around 11

kilometres per hour (six knots).

On Nov. 1 Cyclone Martin flattened Manihiki, killing nine with 10 people still missing, presumed dead. It later that week moved onto French Polynesia and killed nine more people.

World
Amnesty
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committee, said it was set-
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The hearing is part of a
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Amnesty hearing for Hani's killers extended until next year

MAMELODI, South Africa (AP) — An amnesty hearing for the convicted killers of popular black leader Chris Hani was adjourned Friday to allow more witnesses to be called, the amnesty committee's chairman said.

The hearing will resume next year, said Justice Hassan Mall, chairman of the amnesty committee. No date was set.

The 1993 killing of Hani, possibly South Africa's most popular black leader after President Nelson, threatened to plunge the country into chaos and derail the country's first all-race elections in 1994.

Clive Derby-Lewis, 62, a former Conservative Party deputy in parliament, and Janusz Walus, 44, a Polish immigrant and fierce anti-Communist, were convicted of Hani's killing.

Sentenced to death — commuted to life in prison when South Africa's new constitution abolished the death penalty — they are now seeking amnesty for the crime.

The amnesty committee is part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigating apartheid-era crimes. It can grant amnesty if it thinks the applicants are telling the truth and acted from political motives.

The Hani amnesty hearing has been interrupted twice since it started in June to accommodate scheduling problems by commissioners, lawyers and Hani's family members, who oppose amnesty. Friday was expected to be the last day, but additional witnesses will be called, Mr. Mall said.

Friday, the committee heard that the gun used to kill Hani was stolen from the South African defence force and delivered to a house at the request of Derby-Lewis.

Faan Venter, a friend of Derby-Lewis, testified that Derby-Lewis told him, "we are stocking up."

Mr. Venter said he interpreted that to mean that the conservative politician was arming against the eventual takeover of the country by opponents of apartheid.

"The gun was stolen from the defence force," Mr. Venter said. "I didn't really want it as I already had a firearm. It was a nuisance."

Mr. Venter said Derby-Lewis asked him to deliver the pistol to the Krugersdorp home of a friend.

"When handing over the gun I had to say: 'this is Clive's Jersey,'" Mr. Venter said.



Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa accidentally falls down as he tries to receive a flag from a student during a ceremony on kicking off a voter registration drive, ahead of the region's controversial first legislative election under Chinese rule (Reuters photo)

H. Kong kicks off voter-registration week for 1998 legislature election

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-Hwa Saturday launched a massive voter-registration campaign in a bid to boost participation in the first elections here under Chinese rule in May 1998.

Mr. Tung officiated at a ceremony to swear in more than 1,000 students from secondary schools and universities as "Voter Ambassadors."

The government plans for the ambassadors to visit every home in Hong Kong to help encourage people to vote in the polls for a new legislature which will replace the Provisional Legislative Council nominated by China.

The provisional body came into office on July 1 when Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty and the previous popularly-elected legislature devised by the last Governor Chris Patten under British rule was scrapped.

The Provisional Legislature immediately came under fire from Democrats here as lacking credibility and transparency.

All 19 members of the Democratic Party, including the Chairman Martin Lee, were ousted from the legislature after July 1.

The Democratic Party launched its own territory-wide street campaign Saturday to raise badly needed funds to fight the elections.

Mr. Lee, chairman of the Democratic Party, led six core party members in the public appeal, weaving among pre-Christmas shoppers.

"Every ticket you buy from us would give us more encouragement," Mr. Lee appealed to pedestrians.

Mr. Lee said the election would be a very difficult one for his party as expenditure for each candidate had increased to 500,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$64,683).

"We are different from the business-dominated parties. They have huge financial support from big corporations. We need to raise money on the streets from you," Mr. Lee said.

The Democratic Party has raised 2.8 million Hong Kong dollars in fund raising trips to Canada and the United States. Twenty seats in the 60-seat legislature are up for election, the remainder to be filled from small special interest constituencies and by direct appointment.

Some 30,000 student ambassadors will visit more than two million households territorywide to help voter-registrations.

Mr. Tung said he was confident the "committed and idealistic" students would complete the registration task over the next week.

"We are now our own masters. In order to implement the spirit of the policy of 'one country, two systems', we must hold this election fairly and openly," Mr. Tung said.

"But in order to achieve success for the election, we need massive participation. I appeal to qualified citizens to register as voters," Mr. Tung added.

The venue was decorated with colourful banners with "Hong Kong is my home, let's build the future" and "Participation in Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong, don't hesitate to register as voters."

Donald Tsang, the financial secretary, Anson Chan, the chief secretary for administration and Elsie Leung, secretary for justice, also took part.

Mr. Tung gave the audience a scare, when he tripped and fell as he was about to present a banner to a student, but was helped up and the audience was asked to give him a round of applause for his "hard" efforts in promoting registration.

Under the law anyone who is over 21 and has lived in Hong Kong legally for more than seven years has the right to vote provided they are also permanent residents.

The government has been running television and print campaigns to encourage people who are eligible, but who have not yet applied for permanent resident status to do so. Ethnic Chinese who have lived here more than seven years and those born here generally receive it automatically.

Legal experts have said that permanent residents who also hold foreign passports, which many people in Hong Kong do, could lose their right to consular protection by their home country as permanent resident status could be considered equivalent to citizenship.

No date set for new military exit from Bosnia

WASHINGTON (R) — There is "a general feeling" against setting a firm withdrawal date for any new military force in Bosnia, but the United States and its allies have not decided whether to fix a deadline, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said Friday.

He told reporters on his plane returning from Europe that the subject was controversial in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and in the U.S. Congress, which must approve funding for any U.S. participation in such a follow-on to the current Bosnia peace-keeping force.

Washington and its allies are deciding whether to send troops to Bosnia next June after the scheduled exit of a NATO-led, 34,000-member Stabilisation Force (SFOR). The United States has so far declined to commit troops for a force despite urging from Britain, Germany and France.

"There is great division on this subject matter still on the hill (Capitol Hill). There was a division among the European members" of NATO, Mr. Cohen said of discussions at an alliance defence ministers meeting in Brussels this week.

"There was no consensus at the meeting about whether there should be a specific end date or end state," he said.

"There was, I think, a general feeling, however, that specific time lines and dates were generally not advisable. We have said that ourselves."

Mr. Cohen spoke a day after NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana said in Paris that any follow-on to SFOR should be kept under review for possible withdrawal rather than be given a fixed pull-out date.

The secretary, who has been sceptical of further U.S. military presence in Bosnia, said members of Congress were wary of a follow-on American

presence in large part because previous deadlines have not resulted in final military withdrawal from Bosnia.

"I think there is a great division of opinion of that on Capitol Hill. I think that most members of the (senate) Armed Services Committee reflected some hesitation about specific time lines in the past, they probably would in the future," he told reporters.

"I think there is a sense that a great deal of progress has been made and that whenever a firm date is set, then certain expectations are raised on the part of those who support it and on the part of those who are opposed to Dayton (the Dayton peace accords), and whether that is the most viable way of proceeding."

Mr. Cohen stressed that time was only one factor in selling U.S. participation in any new force to Congress. Even more important, he said, was a call

by Washington for Europeans to put more money and effort into training local police forces and rebuilding Bosnia.

"I think that (the time factor) is only one aspect of the effort to sell this to Capitol Hill in the way of building a consensus, but not the only aspect," he said.

In Brussels, the NATO defence ministers agreed to order military leaders of the member countries to begin plans for different options for a follow-on force in Bosnia next year.

But Mr. Cohen and U.S. officials at the meeting stressed repeatedly that President Bill Clinton had made no decision and that Congress would require the White House to meet stringent criteria such as numbers of American troops and cost if Mr. Clinton decided to contribute soldiers to the new force.

U.S. charges filed in alleged theft from TWA flight 800 wreckage

NEW YORK (AP) — Two TWA employees and a former police officer were charged Friday with stealing pieces of the TWA flight 800 wreckage to support a theory that a missile brought down the jumbo jet.

Terrell Stacey, a TWA pilot who worked in a hangar where the plane was being reassembled, and Elizabeth Sanders, another TWA employee, were accused of conspiring to help Mrs. Sanders' husband, James, the former police officer, develop a theory that a missile brought down the plane on July 17, 1996, killing all 230 people aboard.

Mr. Stacey was charged with theft of government property, a misdemeanor; James and Elizabeth Sanders were each charged with aiding and abetting, according to an affidavit filed in U.S. district court in Brooklyn. The aiding and abetting charge carries a maximum of 10 years in prison while the misdemeanor charge carries up to one year.

None of the three has been arrested yet, but they are expected to surrender.

The stolen parts, which included a piece of seat fabric, were later used by conspiracy theorists to support their position that a missile brought

down flight 800.

The 747 exploded in midair minutes after takeoff from New York's Kennedy Airport, sending wreckage over 5 miles of ocean off the coast of Long Island. More than a million parts retrieved from the ocean bottom were taken to a nearby hangar where investigators have reconstructed the plane.

James Kallstrom, New York FBI head, announced two weeks ago that the FBI was suspending its probe into the crash, having found no evidence that a bomb or missile brought down the plane.

James Sanders, a former California police officer, had

been under investigation by the FBI since last May, after he revealed that he had fabric from a seat cushion belonging to TWA flight 800. He said a California laboratory had tested red residue from a seat cushion, and had concluded that it contained missile fuel.

Mr. Kallstrom has called Mr. Sanders' assertions outrageous, saying that FBI analysts, confirmed by an independent lab, found the substance was glue used to hold the fabric to the seats. Mr. Kallstrom said investigators tracked the glue back to its manufacturer, and the company, which holds a patent on the substance, confirmed that it was glue.

New strains of superbug alarm doctors

LONDON (R) — Medical experts called Friday for special precautions after Japanese doctors identified new strains of a superbug with some resistance to the most potent antibiotic.

Dr. Keiichi Hiramatsu and colleagues at Jutendo University in Tokyo found a strain of the common infection staphylococcus aureus earlier this year — known by its initials as VRSA — that did not respond to vancomycin, the last line of defence against infection.

In their latest research, reported in the Lancet medical journal, they uncovered more strains of the organism that showed variable resistance to the drug.

"This is a very big warning," Dr. Soad Tabagchali, a microbiol-

ogist at St. Bartholomew's Royal London School of Medicine and Dentistry, told Reuters.

"If this organism spreads we may find some patients for whom the only antibiotics available are ineffective."

Strains of the so-called MRSA bacteria that are resistant to the antibiotic methicillin have been found around the world since the late 1970s, but doctors have always had another weapon — vancomycin.

The discovery of the new strains of VRSA means the new superbug might eventually be untreatable.

Dr. Hiramatsu and his team said there is "a need for special precaution to limit the spread of VRSA strains", a plea repeated

by Dr. Tabagchali.

"More has to be done regarding detection, infection control and antibiotic policies," she said. "We need to reduce usage of these very important antibiotics."

The bacterium usually results from a wound infection and is common in hospitals around the world. It can cause anything from a simple boil to life-threatening conditions such as blood poisoning, meningitis and pneumonia. Elderly people and anyone with an impaired immune system are most at risk.

Penicillin was first used against the infection but as more powerful strains developed more effective drugs were needed. Up until now methicillin and vancomycin were the most potent treatments,

which is why doctors are so alarmed about VRSA.

Dr. Hiramatsu examined vancomycin resistance in 1,149 strains of MRSA isolated from patients in 203 hospitals in Japan. Variable resistance was found in 20 per cent of strains from Jutendo University Hospital, in 9.3 per cent of those from seven university hospitals and in 1.3 per cent of strains in clinics.

Dr. Tabagchali said MRSA is found worldwide now, which could lead to a vicious cycle of increased use of vancomycin and a build-up of resistant strains. Other drugs are being developed but they are still experimental and not yet available.

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Jordan Press Foundation,
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Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

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Suffering is indivisible

THE 41-nation conference in London on the Nazi gold reminds the world again of the victims of World War II. When the international community speaks of the victims of Nazism, only the trauma of European Jews springs to mind, thus obscuring the fact that other peoples were also victimised by the Nazis.

Many countries have so far offered contributions to a fund for the victimised Jews and their children and grandchildren. Other conferences will convene to trace art objects belonging to those victims. Even their insurance policies will be traced in an effort to widen the compensation now being prepared for them.

But while it is a noble effort to remember and compensate victims of the Nazi regime for all the evil perpetrated against them, there is a moral duty on the part of the international community not to forget the atrocities committed against gentiles who suffered as a result of persecution against Jews. In order for the ongoing London meeting to serve as a model for remembering victims of genocides and other crimes against humanity, the prime movers behind the conference should widen its scope so that non-Jews can also benefit from international concern and benevolence. While World War II is incomparable in extent, in terms of the atrocities committed before and during it, there have been other genocides that deserve proper treatment from the community of nations. Remember the million Cambodians who were massacred by the Khmer Rouge? The hundreds of thousands of Chechens who were killed in the war there two years ago, and the thousands of Bosnians who were butchered in the Yugoslav civil war?

Closer to home, 50 years ago, nearly one million Palestinians were forced to flee their homeland and leave behind all their belongings and birth rights, and not just possessions of precious metals, bank accounts, art objects or insurance policies. The magnitude of the losses sustained and still endured by the Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis whether in 1948 or in the 1967 war is incalculable.

Should then some of the money to be raised in London be earmarked for the Palestinians who have been denied all their properties and rights for over five decades? Or should a similar conference be convened to compensate all other peoples regardless of their religion, race, colour or nationality?

While no people, with a few exceptions, can claim they lost as much as the European Jews did in World War II, other nations which have been dispossessed and made to suffer great hardships must not be forgotten in the scramble to compensate victims of the Holocaust.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Sultan Hattab Saturday said that in view of the present deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations and in light of Israel's adamant stand vis-a-vis the Palestinian people's rights there is need for an Arab summit meeting where Arab leaders can adopt a collective stand to address the situation. Faced with the intransigent Israeli stand and in view of the failure of the U.S. to force the Israelis to comply with the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace, the Palestinians seem to be helpless and supported only by Jordan which is sparing no effort in backing the Palestine leadership's quest to regain the occupied territory, said the writer. He said the Palestinians and the Jordanians have maintained their strong and unique relationship and, of course, Jordan has spared no effort in its drive to support the Palestinians in their quest to regain their rights, but the Arab Nation has a duty to back such efforts and help the Palestinians attain their national and legitimate objectives, said Hattab. The writer said the world community had imposed sanctions on Iraq making it pay for its brief occupation of Kuwait, but no sanctions and no punishment of any sort has been imposed on Israel to make it pay for its 30 years occupation of Arab lands. He said the Arab countries can collectively find a way to force Israel to succumb to the requirements of peace.

Al Dustour's Yasser Zaareh said the danger of a U.S. military strike against Baghdad is still very much alive, and this is seen in the ongoing threats coming from Washington against the Iraqi leadership. The U.S. president is being instigated by the Zionist lobby to launch a military strike on Iraq to further weaken the Arab World and to remove any chance for the Arabs of ever regaining their occupied lands. Zaareh said. The writer said in light of this situation, the Arab Gulf states should escalate their total rejection of a military strike against Iraq and they should make it clear that their territory will not be used as a platform for launching aggression on the Arab country. The writer also said that the Arabs must launch a diplomatic offensive to win European countries' support for ending the sanctions on Iraq as well as averting further acts of aggression on the Iraqi people.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Division over peace dividend

BY PEACE dividend we mean American financial support, joint economic projects, and a flow of foreign investments, the combination of which would help the Jordanian economy, reduce poverty, create more jobs and raise the standard of living so that the man/woman in the street will feel the difference.

Those who complain of the absence of a peace dividend can be divided into two groups: The purpose of the first group is to urge the parties concerned, especially the U.S., Israel and the international community to recognise the problem and do more to help the Jordanian economy. By opting for peace, Jordan took upon itself huge risks, therefore it is normal to expect some reward in the form of tangible benefits. The second group aims at embarrassing the government and showing that peace is fruitless. They prefer no war-no-peace status which prevailed before signing the peace treaty until after Syria reaches its own peace treaty with Israel.

Those who oppose the peace treaty and like to embarrass the government have no right to demand peace dividends. Not only because they reject peace as agreed upon, but also because they hate American aid, despite projects, abhor foreign investments, and criticise the qualified industrial zone (QIZ).

What the first group describes as desirable peace dividends are seen by the second group as damages and risks resulting from peace such as stepping up American influence, inviting Israeli economic hegemony, and allowing control of our national economy by foreigners.

The demand for peace dividends by the first group started to be answered. The U.S. financial aid to Jordan was increased by \$100 million this year and will reach \$225 million next year. The benefits of the QIZ Industrial Estate and its designation by Washington as a qualified industrial zone is another dividend. The European Union provided Jordan this year with financial aid several times the size of their usual financial assistance in previous years. The large scale projects to extract minerals from the Dead Sea are under way with partial external financing.

It is now abundantly clear that peace dividends in

favour of Jordan started to materialise. But in order to have a meaningful dialogue over peace dividends, their nature and presence, we have to agree on certain common grounds, such as that peace dividends coming from the United States, Israel, and the international community are required and desirable. Those who resent such dividends should not show disappointment and complain that peace was signed without dividends. As a matter of logic such groups should be happy that what they call risks and damages did not happen after all.

The peace treaty between Jordan and Israel was signed in 1994 at exactly the right time. Jordan recovered all its occupied land, secured its share of water, and transformed its western ceasefire lines into international borders recognised by Israel and the whole world. The treaty put an end to the probability of another war which may have resulted in another Israeli expansion, and established Jordan's national security. Those who couldn't care less about Jordan's national security have no right to complain that the dividends they don't like of a treaty they don't approve of did not materialise.

Jerusalem needs solid, united Arab, Islamic, Christian stand

By Dr. Raouf Abu Jabr

ON NOVEMBER 10, Al Aswak daily published a disturbing report entitled: "Israel and the Vatican sign a legal agreement that constitutes the cornerstone in their bilateral normalisation process."

The report was subsequently followed by other articles in the press confirming that the agreement was signed by the Israeli foreign minister and the Apostolic delegate to Israel who expressed delight over the move which he described as forming a new and important phase in the process of normalising relations between the Holy See and Israel (Al Ra'i daily Nov. 11, 1997).

The agreement reaffirms the principle of internal administrative independence of the Catholic institutions in Israel. It also reaffirms the application of the Israeli law to the institutions' foreign relations — which in the view of the Jewish state means that Israeli law will be applied on eastern Jerusalem which was annexed in 1967 and houses the Holy Sepulchre Church. It has to be noted here that the Vatican has not recognised Israel's annexation of eastern Jerusalem (Al Dustour Nov. 11, 1997).

On November 11, 1997, the Jerusalem Post published the following:

"The agreement, which deals with the legal status of the Catholic Church's institutions in Israel, is part of the basic agreement signed by Israel and the Holy See in December of 1993 and will provide the legal basis for the status and work of many other Catholic monasteries, schools and institutions which have been operating under Israeli legislation. With this agreement, the Catholic Church in Israel and its affiliated institutions, will have a legal status similar to that granted to voluntary organisations. According to the Israeli foreign ministry, this agreement does not grant the church any immunity — only independence to deal with its internal affairs. For this agreement to be implemented it will have to secure the necessary legislation from the Knesset."

Al Dustour daily published an important commentary on Nov. 12, 1997 by my friend Sheikh Hassan Tahboub, minister of Awqaf and religious affairs in the Palestinian National Authority. Sheikh Tahboub considered the agreement a new dagger stabbed in

the back of the peace process and said that it created a serious situation by giving Israel custody over the holy places in the Holy City of Jerusalem. This agreement, he said, violated all international laws and resolutions which consider Eastern Jerusalem a land occupied since 1967. These international laws do not grant Israel the right to take any decisions or to deal with or to assume custody over these places. He said that the agreement, which came as a surprise to the PNA, is rejected outright and is not considered binding for the authority because it is simply a fresh Israeli attempt to preempt final status talks over the fate of Jerusalem.

In order to adequately handle this dangerous topic, it is inevitable for us to return to the developments in ties between Israel and the Vatican:

1. The serious dialogue dates back to 1965 when the second Vatican council endorsed a document that absolved the Jews from murdering Jesus Christ.

2. The recent dialogue between the Vatican and Israel started in 1992 when both sides created a bilateral committee entrusted with normalising relations.

3. Israel and the Vatican signed the basic agreement on Dec. 20, 1993 and both sides exchanged representatives and documents of mutual recognition. They also pledged to combat anti-Semitism.

4. These developments were a source of regret in the Arab countries which used to deeply appreciate the Vatican's long standing position on the Palestine problem. More than others, the Jordanians and the Palestinians, including their Catholic communities, were deeply hurt. They conveyed to the Vatican their dismay and dissatisfaction over the Holy See's move.

5. Perhaps the most outspoken statement came from Patriarch Maximus V. Hakim, head of the Greek Catholic Church, who in an interview with the Lebanese Al Safir newspaper on June 4, 1994 said: "Our church is not keen on following the rules of the Vatican. We are free to act in matters that have a political nature, and if the Holy See took a stand different from the present one and if it committed a blunder and abandoned Jerusalem, we will oppose everything we see as contravening Arab interests."

But the Greek Orthodox Church, the

largest in the Holy Land, has failed so far in issuing any reaction.

6. According to the Israel-Vatican December agreement, the first step to follow the establishment of diplomatic relations was the creation of expert committees to work out details regarding the legal and financial status of the Catholic Church and its properties in the Holy Land. These committees should, under the provisions of the agreement, complete their work in 24 months. I would like to point out that the Catholic Church owns 300 institutions in Israel and the occupied Arab territories, including schools, hospitals and orphanages.

7. The basic agreement opened the door for the conclusion of a protocol on June 15, 1994 declaring the establishment of full diplomatic ties at the level of Apostolic delegate for the Vatican and ambassador for Israel. Yossi Beilin, the former deputy foreign minister of Israel, announced the accord that was issued simultaneously in the Vatican and Israel:

a) The Vatican is interested in taking part in efforts to find a religious solution for Jerusalem when the issue is put forward for discussions aimed at reaching a final settlement.

b) The Holy places issue would not be settled solely in discussions with the Palestinians, but also with the representatives of the various religions. The Holy See has an interest in this question.

c) Israel does not recognise the Vatican's position demanding international guarantees for the Holy City.

8. The general feeling was that the Vatican could have postponed taking these steps and the exchange of ambassadors with Israel until the time when all the outstanding issues would have been settled and/or until the questions pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian accord have been tackled.

9. As to the Christian communities in Jordan and Palestine, they felt that the Vatican took a unilateral step in dealing with questions that concern them and that the situation would have been better had there been a unified stand before the decisions were taken. This feeling led to dissatisfaction and protests at the levels of both Christian laymen and clergy.

This brief outline about this extremely

important issue clearly shows that the agreement on the mutual recognition as signed on Dec. 30, 1992 has actually laid the foundation for a future relationship between Israel and the Vatican. The ensuing results have started to show strongly in the area. Despite our full knowledge of its contents when it was first unveiled, we have failed to take any measure over the past five years to deal with this issue. We have not moved one inch forward despite our full knowledge that making media statements will not redress the situation. Here again, we were taken by surprise. The question we should ask ourselves is what is our future working plan to place matters in their right perspective? And what can we do to remove the dagger that was stabbed in the back of the peace process as Sheikh Tahboub said.

The question is what should we do to confront these positions. The answer is that we have to conduct a quick study on the various articles of the agreement after it is obtained by the concerned authorities through legal means. After that, we should set up a specialised commission to conduct urgent talks with all Arab parties that are concerned with Jerusalem's religious issues, most importantly the following:

1. The Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs
2. Arab-Christian religious leaders
3. Muslim religious leaders
4. Officials in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio
5. Other organisations which have a relationship with Jerusalem, particularly Christian Arabs in the city and its suburbs.

The aim of these consultations is to find and to agree on a realistic working plan that would enable these organisations to follow a course of action to counter the present trend, which, if allowed to continue, would shake the Arab stand from its foundation and would give Israel complete custody over the holy places in Jerusalem. The Holy City lives in the conscience of the Arab people and it should acquire the first priority on the Arab Nation's agenda because this Holy City is a sacred trust for every Arab.

The writer is president of the Orthodox Central Council. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

The year of living dangerously

By Gwynne Dyer

THE LAST of Asia's hidden economic time-bombs, in South Korea's debt-ridden industrial conglomerates and Japan's secretive banking sector, have now been dragged out into the open. The global economy will probably ride out the resulting upheavals without a major recession. But what about Asia's political stability?

"If this [Russian] government went and the trouble went, you'd have hyper-inflation, you'd have a closing-up to the Western world because reform didn't work," said Al Breach of the Russian European Centre for Economic Policy in Moscow. "It would be a while before you got another set of people prepared to carry out reforms, and in the meantime things could be very ugly."

"If Indonesia enters a period of serious political instability, it might derail the whole process (of economic restructuring)," said Julio Cesar Paredes of Manila's Centre for Research and Communications, pointing out that President Suharto is now 76 and has no designated successor. When power last changed hands in Indonesia, three decades ago, half a million people died.

In Taiwan, voters have just given the biggest-ever boost to the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which advocates declaring formal independence from China. It will probably win control of the legislature next year — but the Communist Chinese regime has

always threatened to invade if Taiwan declares independence. If the Asian economic disaster spreads into China, the regime might welcome confrontation with Taiwan to distract citizens from their domestic woes.

In India, the coalition government has just fallen, and the likely beneficiaries are the Hindu sectarian Bharatiya Janata Party. The BJP's anti-Muslim extremists talk openly about "testing" a nuclear weapon just to overawe Pakistan — and that would almost automatically push the Pakistanis into

of Communism in Europe ended the Cold War and facilitated the spread of democracy elsewhere. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait indirectly caused a new Arab-Israeli peace process that transformed the political climate of the Middle East. Globalisation unleashed an unprecedented wave of economic growth in most of the larger countries of what we used to call the "Third World."

The result is our brave new world of free markets, open societies, global communications, and (in most places) peace. There

Not all of these crises-in-waiting are linked to the current turmoil in the global markets, but synergistic effects could turn them into a real trend-breaker.

exploding a weapon too, exploding a nuclear confrontation in the subcontinent.

Then there's the deteriorating Israeli-Palestinian relationship, and Iraq, and North Korea, and sundry other flashpoints around the periphery of Asia. Not all of these crises-in-waiting are linked to the current turmoil in the global markets, but synergistic effects could turn them into a real trend-breaker.

We have now had five or six years of positive synergy. The fall

have been political struggles and economic casualties, but the world is in better shape than it used to be.

The worry is that synergy may be a two-way street. What if several things go wrong in Asia at once? Which of them would be mere local misfortunes, and which combinations might trigger a slide back into a different and much more dangerous kind of world?

When you pose the question this way, even contingencies like a

North Korean attack on the South or a renewal of the Palestinian "intifada" in the Israeli-occupied territories fade in importance. Any upheaval that remains confined within one country, like a succession crisis in Indonesia, is only a local misfortune.

What really counts, in this context, is Asia's three great powers: China, India, and Russia. (Japan, though an economic giant, lacks the other attributes of great-power status.) If these three powers, or even any two of them, become hostile towards their neighbours, then the whole world may be poisoned by the fall-out.

The country least at risk, oddly, is the one with the most repressive regime. China's non-convertible currency and largely state-controlled economy insulate it from the pressures that have forced so many of its neighbours into painful reforms. Reform must come to the Chinese economy in the end, but it won't be this year.

It is well that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) does not have to cope with bailing Beijing out at the same time as it is dealing with half the rest of Asia. It is certainly good that the Chinese Communist regime does not need military distractions abroad at the time when Taiwan is finally democratising, and starting to question the old shibboleths about reunification.

Russia is more worrisome. Yet, the whole Yeltsin/Chubais strategy for ensuring a Communist defeat in the 1999 election hinges on paying off back wages and getting

economic growth moving by the end of this year. But the recovery depends on foreign investment and loans, and both are fleeing Russia as part of the panicky retreat from "emerging markets" after the Asian disasters.

To slow the flight, Russia has already doubled its interest rates, which is killing domestic growth. If the trouble is hit hard by speculators, inflation will re-ignite. The IMF may soon have to step in with emergency aid to prevent a fiscal meltdown in Russia.

That will mean swallowing its principles, for the IMF is already withholding promised money as a way of forcing Moscow to get its finances in order. But this is a case where principles may have to wait: Russia's people have continued to back democracy and reform through six years of economic misery, but there probably is a limit to their patience. We don't want to find out where it is.

Finally, India. Outsiders have no business meddling in the democratic choices of Indians, even if they choose to elect the BJP. But if India were to blow off another nuclear weapon, after abstaining for a quarter-century, it would have a profoundly negative impact on expectations and behaviours throughout Asia.

The odds are still good that none of these things will happen, or at least not enough of them to change the fundamentally hopeful trend of events. But this is definitely going to be Asia's year of living dangerously — and the world's.

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By Robert Fish
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Building a new Lebanon ravages its Ottoman treasures

Lebanon's cultural heritage of Ottoman mansions and villas is being destroyed — even as the country rebuilds itself after 16 years of civil war. In a nation where only land — not property — has value, speculators are tearing down a magnificent legacy from the 19th century.

By Robert Fisk

THEY ARE disappearing like old friends. For years, I had driven past a declining Ottoman villa opposite the Ein El Mreisse mosque near my home in Beirut. It had arched windows with delicate lead tracery and a bright red tile roof — one of the very red roofs that T.E. Lawrence admired when he visited the city before World War I.

Then one day, I had to make a detour on the coast road because a massive ball-and-chain machine had been erected on the road and was busy smashing down the villa. Today, in its place, there stands a cheap block of concrete apartments and, on the ground floor, a hamburger joint.

The books of old photographs which are now so popular with Lebanon's upper classes show that Beirut was once the most beautiful city on the eastern Mediterranean coast, a noble, dignified place of castles and gardens and gentle rectangular houses of cut stone and Turkish windows and fluted pillars.

It was a town of traders, Christians and Muslims, Jews and Armenians, Turks and Egyptians and French and English, a city whose houses were often smothered in bougainvillea.

Its shameful destruction began in the sixties, when developers used bulldozers to pulverise the great Ottoman houses on the sea front near the St. George Hotel and allowed the Gulf Arabs to build apartment blocks in the mountain villages. The wartime militias and the Syrian and Israeli armies destroyed the city a second time in the eighties.

Now its third destruction has begun. Down are coming the red-roofed homes on the coast that survived the civil war. Down are coming the colonnaded old schools only lightly touched by shells. On the heavily-damaged quayside in Beirut, Solidere — the company charged with rebuilding the city — levelled a street of magnificent Ottoman facades.

True, Solidere is restoring hundreds of buildings, though

many of them are of French mandate (1920-46) vintage. Even the mock-Baroque facade of the Martyrs' Square police station was smashed down after the war. "It was an error," one of Solidere's leading shareholders told me later. "It will be rebuilt as it was." But it has not been rebuilt.

All across Lebanon, it is the same story. Buildings of dressed stone and pretty balconies and hallways entered between Egyptian-style pillars are being left to rot. Some were damaged in the war, their roofs torn off by artillery fire and now allowed to decay.

Others have been deliberately left to die, the very last of Lebanon's civil war wounded, abandoned on the battlefield. For seven winters since the war ended, the rain has guttered through the eaves, the storms have smashed at the remaining carefully cut glass in the Arabesque windows. Piles of marble floor tiles, wrought-iron balustrades and wooden rafters can now be bought as job lots in the Basta flea-market in Beirut. A piece of Carrera marble costs 50p. "It's now practically hopeless to think that we can keep the old Beirut," Costa Domani says. As a leading member of the Association Pour La Protection des Sites et Anciens Murs de Liban (Apsal), he has watched the Lebanese ignore their country's heritage both during and after the war as the old capitalist ethos that inspired the nation turned the old villas and palaces to dust.

"Anything in Lebanon is tied to money value — not sentimental or architectural value. The land is the thing that is valuable — anything built on the land has no value whatsoever. Those who have made money have done so through land speculation. To safeguard old houses, you need a change in people's thinking."

Apsal believes that owners of fine old properties could be encouraged to restore them by preferential tax treatment, even by reintroducing the old Ottoman system of shariafiyah — whereby those residents who overlook a beautiful house or its gardens would be asked to contribute towards the upkeep of them. "We would like to create a snowball effect with property owners to make them see that if these houses could be maintained they would have real commercial value. There could be laws which demand preservation."

Already in the Chouf mountains, largely inhabited by members of the Druze faith, Walid Jumblatt — leader of the Druze and a minister in the Lebanese government — has ordered that no house of historical value or beauty may be destroyed.

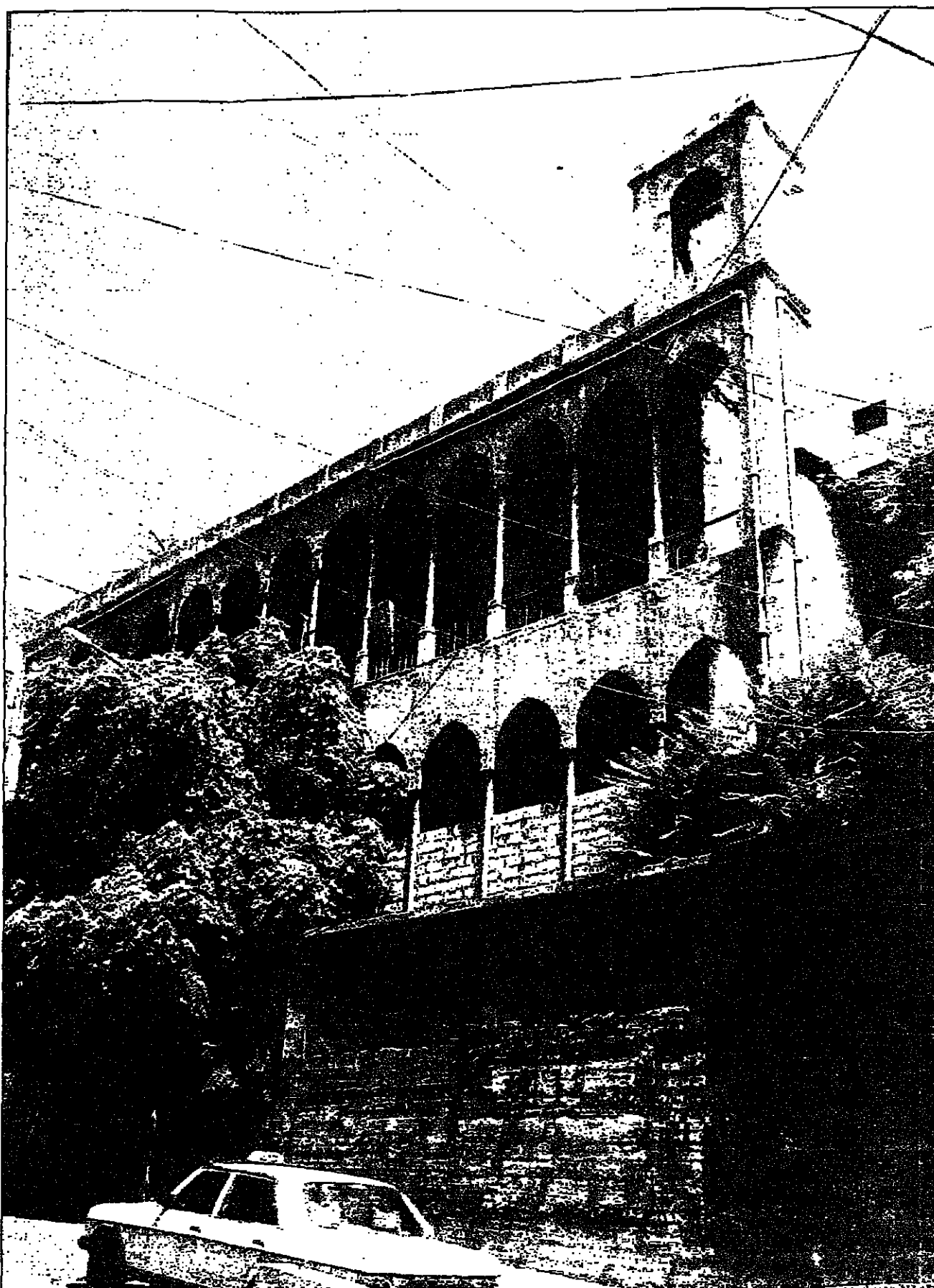
He has filled the palace of Beit Eddine — once the home of Emir Beshir the Second and now the site of an annual music festival run by his wife Nora — with Roman mosaic floors. He has supported the preservation of the wonderful old stone walls and "serail" in the Christian mountain town of Deir El-Qamar.

The new downtown Beirut project — much praised by the press and foreign governments as a symbol of Lebanon's post-war rebirth — has promised the Lebanese a new city of high-rise hotels and business centres, banks and archaeological parks and apartment blocks.

But the pictures boasting of the "new" Beirut look frighteningly similar to Jeddah and Abu Dhabi and all the other Gulf port cities which used the wealth of the 1970s to destroy their heritage for money. Solidere has poured millions into restoration — some of it spent on valuable discoveries of Beirut's Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine past.

But Domani, who himself lives in a 150-year old house in Sursok Street in the Ashrafieh quarter of Beirut, is not satisfied, alleging that the company has wrecked 17th-century areas "without pity" and has preserved less than 50 per cent of the 550 old buildings in the ruined former wartime frontline. Solidere is preserving the old Jewish synagogue in Wadi Abu Jamil — damaged by civil war fighting and also by Israeli shellfire in 1982 — in the centre of Beirut but, according to Apsal, seven beautiful Ottoman houses in the same street have been destroyed to widen the roadway.

"We have to be more active ourselves," Domani says. "We must look for sponsorship from abroad, from wealthy companies and individuals; and we must come up with projects that would give these buildings an economic significance. At the moment, some of these houses are lived in by tenants paying tiny fixed rents — so the houses are uneconomical for the owners who can do little to improve their revenues. And the people who have money in this country don't realise what they can do



Ottoman villas like this one are increasingly being viewed by most modern Lebanese as worth no more than the land they stand on (photo by Robert Fisk)

with these beautiful houses — there's a lot of status quo from living in a mansion. Yet all these people want is to live in modern condominiums."

How to change a people? "Pity wrote in 1934. He can say that again. . .boasts not except among its ruins," the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran

The Independent

Humanitarian issues should be taken into account in future discussions of refugee problem — Prince Hassan

(Continued from page 1)

government saying that "dismay over Netanyahu's policies and our differences should not prevent us from launching a dialogue with the moderate voices in Israel and the world at large with the purpose of attaining peace in the region."

He stressed that stability and peace in the region can be achieved through mutu-

al cooperation within the framework of a code of ethics which can be laid by the various parties through dialogue and cooperation. Prince Hassan said that absence of dialogue was behind the past failure in achieving strong cooperation and association with Europe and stressed the need for an institutionalised form of dialogue to achieve aspired goals.

Referring to the important role which the Euro-

peans can play regarding the peace process, Prince Hassan said that the Barcelona Declaration has succeeded in laying down the foundation for a dialogue with the Middle East, and emphasised the importance of multi-party cooperation in the cultural, security and economic fields.

Prince Hassan said that the time has come for a re-examination of the concept of education and the flow

of information between Europe and the Middle East within a framework that would safeguard traditions and heritage, whilst at the same time seeking to understand each other's cultures. He also stressed that the divergence of views when based on mutual respect is important because it further deepens the concept of dialogue between the two sides.

Prince Hassan referred to the new world order by

saying that "this subject leads us to say that regretfully some nations which exerted positive efforts and fulfilled their requirements of the 'international club' have not received the attention matching these efforts."

Prince Hassan laid stress to the major role which NGOs can play in serving society and promoting regional cooperation and cultural exchange, whereas all are committed to the

humanitarian code of conduct.

Referring to inter-faith dialogue, the Crown Prince said that the region embodied two rival concepts: the rebirth of nationalism and religious fanaticism, stressing the need for a constructive dialogue to reconcile them and to help achieve economic and cultural cooperation.

Referring to the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights, Prince Hassan said that the anniversary underlines the importance of humanitarian concepts and the fulfillment of the principles of humanitarian understanding which can be achieved through the NGOs, which deal with social issues, armed violence, terrorism and also such issues as famine.

In this respect the Prince noted that while some parts of the world enjoy the lion's share of food others

continue to suffer, and that this situation contravenes the very concepts of moral principles.

Prince Hassan said that regrettably the West has dealt with this region in three dimensional concepts: Israel, security and oil. As a result, he added, these concepts prevented the emergence of a transparent order which can deal with the region's conflicts.

Kingdom awaits new legislation as democracy finds itself at a junction

(Continued from page 1)

The regime, and the opposition which boycotted the ballot, should seek to find an alternative forum for dialogue and cooperation, Mr. Izzeddine told the Jordan Times. "Not being in Parliament does not mean being unable to approach the government. Parliament is very important, but so are other institutions in the civil society, like political parties, pressure groups and think-tanks."

Mr. Izzeddine was a member in a royally-appointed broad-based commission that helped draft the 1991 National Charter, which included guidelines for the country's future democratic path.

"Formal discussions in Parliament should be complemented by informal discussions outside Parliament," said Mr. Izzeddine.

The Islamic Action Front (IAF), political arm of the powerful Muslim Brotherhood movement, and eight political parties boycotted this year's ballot in protest at what they said was a steady erosion of parliamentary authority under successive governments. They said they were against

the one-person, one-vote system under which the last two elections were held and criticised mid-May amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law as lowering the ceiling of public freedoms.

The government maintains that its opponents must learn the rules of democracy and respect majority decisions.

Dismissing the opposition's charges as unfounded, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour pointed out that all political shades in the Kingdom were given the possibility to express their stands freely.

"Could anybody say that different positions are not being expressed? Did any member of the opposition ever ask for a forum to express his ideas and receive a refusal as an answer? Were not all main issues, from the peace treaty to the elections law, debated and voted on Parliament?" Dr. Ensour said.

However, former Prime Minister and Lower House Speaker Taher Masri, a liberal who backed the boycott call, told the Jordan Times the current electoral law should be abrogated to save the Kingdom's democracy. Many like him believe the

system, introduced in 1993, encouraged tribalism in a society where tribal considerations have always come before political affiliations.

"A change of the electoral system should be the first step in order to revive the democratisation process and show genuine intentions from the government side," he said. "A credible government should start with bold steps," he added.

"Unfortunately, rightist thinking is now taking over in our policy-making, and civil institutions are becoming weaker and weaker."

Politicians remain divided on whether the new 80-seat Lower House will be able to meet the challenge of improving laws that will take Jordan into the year 2000 and guarantee greater freedoms.

Opposition leaders say the Chamber's make up and the deputies' lack of legal expertise — only a handful are lawyers by education — are major setbacks.

Only 16 are opposition deputies — Islamists, Pan-Arabists, leftists and independents, while the rest are tribal leaders, centrists and pro-establishment figures.

However, others say popular criticism against the present make-up of the Lower House, and suggestions Parliament will be a mere rubber stamp, might put deputies on the defensive.

They say a recent survey conducted by a local institute showed that most of the deputies opposed the strict amendments introduced to the press law.

Details of the proposed three draft laws have remained sketchy. But according to official sources, Interior Minister Nahir Rashid has already presented the government with his version of the new elections law.

The draft is expected to divide the Kingdom into 80 constituencies from the current 21 to ensure better representation, to reduce voting age to 18 from 19, and to introduce magnetic voting cards to guard against any abuses — key points used to challenge the fairness of the November poll.

Changes introduced to the law on political parties are expected to give the Interior Minister a greater role in monitoring party funds, while the number of founding members might be increased from 50 to

200, according to speculations.

The new political parties law is also expected to dissolve any political party that fails to achieve parliamentary representation in two consecutive elections and might introduce a capital requirement for parties, analysts have said.

"The government is thinking of weakening political parties, but it does not understand how dangerous this game is," said human rights activist Labib Qamhawi, an independent opposition figure.

"Any policy aiming at alienating the opposition will create chaos and disorder," Dr. Qamhawi and others believe a national conference would be the only legitimate venue for the formulation of the three cornerstone laws, instead of having the government present them to Parliament.

The 1997 elections have exposed the organisational weaknesses of most of the existing 21 political parties. Apart from the Islamist movement that was allowed to operate under a ban imposed on all parties in 1957 to counter communist groups, none of the new groups, legalised after 1992, was able to have an

impact on the electorate and win large following.

Despite the merger of nine political groups in the much-touted centrist National Constitutional Party (NCP), only two of their official 11 candidates won.

The election boycott of the organised and influential IAF — which had 17 deputies in the former legislature — has stripped the Lower House of what could have been the largest single party.

The decision of two Islamists to run in the elections — IAF leader Abdullah Alkaleh, and Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Azzaydeh — has led to internal rifts threatening to tear the movement apart.

Politicians said the internal crisis in the Brotherhood reflected a struggle between its old guard, who have always coexisted peacefully with the regime, and a young and angry tide of grassroots members. Major internal IAF elections set for Dec. 18 will show whether hawks or doves will gain a major say in shaping the party's political future.

The government has remained tight-lipped on changes to the professional

associations law governing the Kingdom's 12 unions.

But speculations are that the new law will make membership in the unions voluntary, separate public sector from private sector members, and appoint a manager to supervise the activities of each association.

Successive governments have been engaged in attempts to depoliticise the outspoken Islamist and leftist-dominated unions — a hot bed for political activism during the three-decade ban on parties.

Without a significant parliamentary opposition, the unions are expected to become an ever greater focus for dissent.

Many politicians believe accelerated political reforms will take a while because of other local and regional factors. They said the democratic march made a major reverse after Jordan signed the peace treaty with Israel, opposed by many of the 4.2 million people.

"After the signing of the Wadi Araba (peace) treaty, priority in the government's agenda was given to smoothing relations with Israel at the expense of democracy," Dr. Qamhawi said. Stressing that the peace treaty

was abundantly debated by the last Parliament, which also ratified it, Dr. Ensour said that "in a country where there is no democracy, nobody could say that there is no democracy."

However, "it is not a coincidence that, when the peace process stopped, the democratisation process slowed down," Mr. Izzeddine said.

Political activists warn that lack of progress in overall Arab-Israeli peace efforts and mounting unemployment and poverty could tip the balance in favour of the hard-liners and further harm efforts to boost democracy.

"The people's frustration is increasing, and this will not lead towards the building of a modern Jordan," said Mr. Masri.

"But the process could still be reversed and that depends on the ammunition that the state will give to the moderates, not only in the Muslim Brotherhood, but in all of the Jordanian society," he concluded.

EU to help upgrade Jordan's insurance operations, services

By Iyad Waqfi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki said Saturday that his ministry is now developing its insurance department through the aid and support of the European Union (EU) in order to benefit from Europe's expertise in this regard.

Dr. Mulki told the Jordan Times that the ministry is now in the process of preparing and formulating new laws that would improve the insurance services.

The proposed law should be in line with international insurance laws and should be transparent and able to attract investments, the minister said.

Dr. Mulki added: "The

new legislation is quite different from the previous law in that it takes into consideration the concept of reinsurance.

Basel Hindawi, the director of the ministry's insurance department, indicated that a Jordanian-European meeting, which was held last Thursday, focused on two aspects, the first of which was to float insurance premiums through adopting market economy policies.

"The second one was to amend the compulsory insurance pricing," said Dr. Hindawi, voicing hope that the compulsory insurance pricing would be balanced to cover the damages and be acceptable to all parties.

Lebanon to raise foreign debt in 'stability plan'

BEIRUT (AFP) —

Lebanon plans to tap international capital markets for around \$2 billion in a bid to slash its burgeoning budget deficit and ease pressure on the Lebanese pound.

The cabinet has decided to restructure its estimated \$13.9 billion public debt by converting around \$2 billion of internal liabilities into foreign currency debt.

The stability plan, which also outlines a drastic cut in spending and a boost to revenues mainly through a one per cent tax on company turnover, was unanimously adopted by the 23 ministers at the meeting.

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said interest rates on debt in foreign currencies such as francs, yen or U.S. dollars were around half the 17 to 19 per cent for debt in Lebanese pounds.

"Foreign debt is not

dangerous as long as it does not exceed 50 per cent of our total liabilities," Mr. Hariri told reporters.

He said Lebanon was obliged to borrow to meet its spending because of the swelling budget deficit, with expenditure exceeding revenue by 60 per cent up to October, compared with the forecast 37 per cent for all of 1997.

Lebanon's public debt is around 85 per cent of gross domestic product, while debt servicing costs take up around 40 per cent of the budget, compared with 31.5 per cent in costs for the country's 150,000 public servants.

Mr. Hariri said the external borrowing plan will free up more than \$2 billion for the private sector which would spur economic activity and lower interest rates on the Lebanese pound.

Lebanon's public finances have spiralled out of control because of corruption among politicians and civil servants and the refusal of many of the country's well-off citizens to pay taxes and utility bills.

The stability plan was the result of an accord between Mr. Hariri, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, a key ally of Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon.

"The key point in the plan is the \$2 billion borrowing which will allow the authorities to confront pressures which could weigh down the national currency before the presidential election in November 1998," an economist said.

"The wrangling between the pro-Syrian rulers, which arose before the adoption of the plan, cost the central bank of Lebanon some \$2 billion between June and the end of October to defend the stability of the pound," one banker said.

"The announcement of the stabilisation plan has reversed the weakness on the foreign exchange market and the Bank of Lebanon has started to buy back, in small quantities, foreign currencies," the banker added.

IMF cuts 1998 world growth estimates in light of Asian crisis

WASHINGTON (AFP) —

A senior IMF official warned Friday that the Asian financial crisis would cut deeply into world growth next year, with output falling from a projected 4.3 per cent to 3.5 per cent.

But Stanley Fischer, deputy managing director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), predicted that troubled Asian economies would rebound "in a couple of years," reaching annual growth rates of between six and seven per cent.

He was also upbeat on prospects for South Korea, telling journalists here that a just-approved IMF financial aid and reform package was the best means of restoring growth to its struggling economy.

He said that since Wednesday, when a tentative agreement on the bailout package was announced, the South Korean won had appreciated 2.5 per cent, stock prices were up 15 per cent and the "hemorrhaging" in foreign reserves had been halted.

In fact, Mr. Fischer added, if all goes well, "it is entirely possible South Korea will not have to draw on the later tranches of the programme."

He was addressing reporters here following IMF executive board approval of a three-year \$21 billion credit for South Korea.

The funds are part of a rescue package that with contributions from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and individual countries could amount to more than \$55 billion — the largest in IMF history.

Mr. Fischer disclosed that the IMF, which last September predicted a 4.8 per cent increase in world economic growth in 1998, would later this month announce a downward revision in its estimates to 3.5 per cent because of weakness in Asia.

"The outlook in Asia and Japan has worsened significantly," he said.

While he declined to predict when the turmoil in Asia, brought on by plunging currencies, slumping exports and unreliable banking systems, would end, he said the right steps had been taken.

"We have seen that when a government takes decisive action, when it raises interest rates ... and tightens fis-

cal policy decisively, markets respond," he stressed. "As long as governments defend themselves, they'll succeed."

Since July the IMF has been called on to work out rescue programmes for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea that could amount to nearly \$100 billion.

"They are the best way of restoring growth in the 'miracle' economies of east Asia," he declared.

The South Korean package requires the government to impose strict discipline on the operations of banks and corporations and to open up the financial sector to competition and foreign participation.

Troubled financial institutions will be shut down or restructured.

To bolster confidence, monetary policy is to be tightened immediately. Already, the core interest rate has been raised from 12.5 per cent on Dec. 1 to 25 per cent as of Friday.

But Mr. Fischer denied suggestions that the measures were too severe and threatened to lead South Korea into a recession.

"Without our assistance, there would have been a much deeper recession," he insisted. "This is a problem created before we arrived."

The IMF foresees gross domestic product expansion in South Korea falling from six per cent in 1997 to between 2.5 and three per cent next year.

But budget cuts will be limited, Mr. Fischer stressed, adding that the IMF was not out to trim growth.

"We see this programme as having very little fiscal adjustment — just the necessary amount," he said.

Mr. Fischer also maintained that the IMF still had adequate resources to confront future crises.

Taking account of the three bailout packages already approved, the Fund had \$44 billion in uncommitted reserves and authorization to borrow up to \$25 billion, he said.

In addition, he noted, the IMF at its joint meeting in Hong Kong with the World Bank in September endorsed a 45 per cent increase in IMF quotas.

"In the event of more major crises we will have access to reasonable amounts of funding," he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, December 7, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Advances you've made recently should hold, but it will be more difficult to push ahead for the next few weeks. New things you attempt will fall flat; some could even produce messes. Stick with what you know. Even that could get confusing, but the stakes aren't quite so high.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You'll find it easier to get places you've already been. That's partially because you know the direct route and partially because you have alternative routes you could take. Today, you'll notice this as you visit friends. Allow extra time to reach each destination.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Mercury, as you know, is your ruling planet. It's just gone retrograde in Capricorn, highlighting jointly held finances. This could mean the household money is running out. Stop spending it on anything except the barest of necessities. You'll have fun anyway.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You'll be much more successful today, and for the next few weeks, if you stick with what works. Don't try out a bunch of new stuff. Pull out the oldest recipes you have, instead. Your mate won't like the new fare and neither will you. So why bother?

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Sort and file. Toss all the stuff you won't be needing anymore. You'll be amazed at how much junk you've accumulated. With a little planning, you'll be able to fit 1997 neatly into boxes. Launch new enterprises after Mercury goes direct on Dec. 27.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You'll be more successful today, and for the next few weeks, if you go backward instead of forward. You'll win at games you've played before. You'll enjoy talking over old times. Get out the photo albums tonight and give it a try.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It looks like there's confusion at your house. Not to worry. You have to make a big mess before you get things just the way you want them. Creativity often looks like chaos at first. If you don't want unsolicited criticism, demand privacy.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Review what was done before. Keep the best parts and toss out the stuff that didn't work. That goes for many areas of your life, not the least of which is romance. Something that worked really well for your grandparents will also work for you.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Today, and for the next few weeks, you'll make money doing things you've done before. There may also be buried treasure among your old belongings. This could be a coupon to redeem or a \$50 bill hidden in a pocket. Dig around and see what you can find.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) History is your teacher. You will learn all sorts of valuable lessons over the next few weeks. Many of them will be from older people, telling you stories from their youth. As you understand more of what happened in the past, it'll be easier to make choices now.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Certain information you've acquired must remain private. That's partially just because you promised. You'll be learning more about the situation in the coming few weeks. There's no point in passing a story along until you're sure you've got it right.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you're in the habit of playing Santa Claus, do it again. You'll be even more successful than in years gone by. It's not a good idea to take on a new chore during this coming phase, however. That's especially true with charitable activities. Your experience is an advantage.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise - Zircon

OFFRE D'EMPLOI/VACANCY

LE CENTRE CULTUREL ET DE COOPERATION LINGUISTIQUE D'AMMAN RECHERCHE UNE(E) SECRETAIRE DE DIRECTION TRILINGUE (FRANCAIS-ARABE-ANGLAIS) AYANT UNE BONNE EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONNELLE DE WORD ET EXCEL POUR WINDOWS ET UNE CAPACITE A LA REDACTION EN FRANCAIS. LES CANDIDATE(S) INTERESSE(E)S VOUDRONT BIEN FAIRE PARVENIR LEUR LETTRE DE MOTIVATION MANUSCRITE ACCOMPAGNEE D'UN CURRICULUM VITAE PAR TELECOPIE AU DIRECTEUR DU CENTRE JUSQU'AU 15/12/97 DELAI DE RIGUEUR.

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Gun
- Manufacturer
- Mus. sample
- Incus of the ear
- Man with regrets
- Grade sch.
- 1863 Vicksburg event
- Made-up monster
- Suburban side street
- Boston fish choice
- Jack
- John, the writer
- Sew
- Highest: pref.
- George Floy or Graham
- After all this time
- The best
- Pop
- Blackthorn
- Lolapalooza
- Poet Nash
- Casino calculation
- Like Nash's lama
- Nothing in Nogales
- Grind (teeth)
- Monetary unit of Spain
- Scottish island
- Tri. function
- Friend of Pooh
- Light wood
- Jack
- Broadcasting
- South American cape
- Steve, the golfer
- Ghana's capital
- Otherwise
- Actress Moran
- Syndrome associated with aspirin
- Blaze a trail
- Took to court

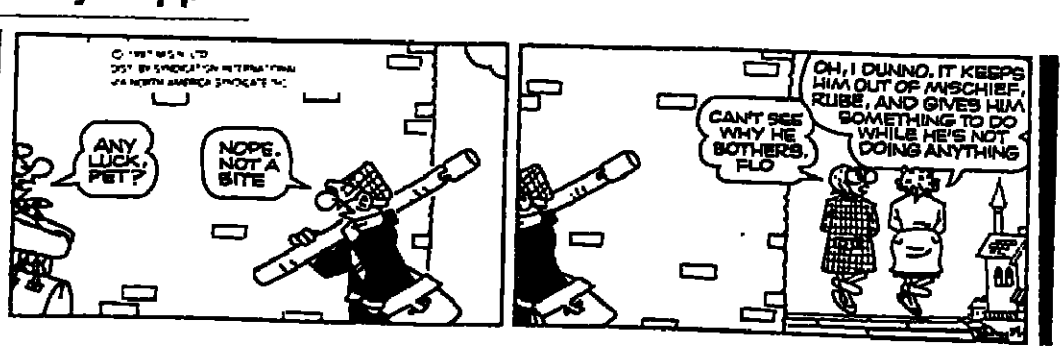
DOWN

- Harvest haul
- Kn of shield
- The king of France
- City on the Adige
- Site of an oracle of Apollo
- Airline to Tel Aviv
- Computer choices
- Last Greek letter
- Classify
- Jack
- Actress Miles
- Borodin opera
- "She's"
- Spartan queen
- Call back
- James, the actor
- Org. of Pepper and Webb
- Chen's and Alan
- "Mephisto Waltz" star
- Makes a new lawn
- John, the pianist
- Drop heavily
- Puthark letter
- French islands
- Jack
- Cap's visor
- Judah's son
- Sideshow performer
- Crownlets
- Desired
- One of the Barnyores
- Holy cow!
- Japanese seaport
- Do up laces
- Make scholarly corrections
- Adult male pig
- Noun-forming suffix
- Diaphanous
- Characterization
- Sky bear

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



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Unscramble those four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ETHUC

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MESECH

SMAJET

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here:

Yesterday's Jumble: KNIFE SIXTY FAULTY GROUCH
Answer: Upholstering a chair can be this - "TACKS-ING" WORK

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Minister of finance requests stricter procedures for accepting cheques

**** DUE TO** the rise in the number of bouncing cheques, the Ministry of Finance has decided to tighten the procedures for accepting cheques that go to the general revenue account. Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez said his ministry has recently noticed that cheques were still being returned by various commercial banks for lack of funds after these cheques were received by accountants from some government departments for the general revenue account.

In a communiqué, he requested all treasurers and collectors of funds not to accept any cheque before ensuring that all the necessary conditions are complete. He noted that such a procedure was necessary due to the long time it takes to collect the amounts and to the long legal period to process the cases in courts if certain situations are warranted.

In another related matter, the Ministry of Finance has asked the various ministries to strictly refrain from borrowing or taking any new credits from banks unless prior coordination is done in this regard with the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Hafez requested all the ministries not to exceed the balance of credit facilities owed to the commercial banks as of Sept. 30/1997 until the end of this year.

The measure was taken to ensure that no new negative impact results on the public sector indebtedness towards the banks by the end of this year. (Al Aswaaq).

Touqan: Most Jordanian contractors do not have work

**** THE SITUATION** in the construction sector is worrying under the obvious recession it is passing through, the chief of the contractors association has said. "Out of the 1,200 members of the association, only 500 are currently having work," Wa'el Touqan said. "We cannot hide the fact that most Jordanian contractors do not have work."

Mr. Touqan expressed the hope that future projects that the private sector will be launching will support the construction sector, "although that would not be enough to solve the problem." The association president expressed his astonishment over demands by public sector institutions that foreign firms be involved in the tenders although such firms have no relation to the construction industry.

The association president underlined the importance of implementing article 8 of the association law which stressed the need to register and classify the contractor at the association. He noted that the construction sector employs 13 per cent of the workforce and accounts for 10 per cent of the gross national product.

Mr. Touqan called for setting up huge construction companies to match those foreign ones and be able to compete with them. He said such huge firms would enable Jordanian contractors to gain foreign expertise and win outside projects. In this regard, one of the proposals is for local contractors to specialise in order to spread the expansion of technology and to allow foreign workers to stay in the Kingdom until replacements are found (Al Aswaaq).

Protect environment or lose money, banks told

SINGAPORE (R) — Banks must protect the environment or risk losing money, officials have said.

Bankers and government officials attending a United Nations-sponsored conference on finance and the environment told Reuters pollution was quickly becoming one of the biggest risks facing companies and the institutions that lent them money.

Pressure to consider the environment was rising rapidly in Europe and the United States and would soon be a major factor in Asia and the rest of the developing world, they said.

"Why do banks need to think about the environment? because, number one, they want to be paid back," said Dennis Zvinakis, field director for the United States Asia Environmental Partnership

Agency in the Philippines.

"It might just effect our bottom line," agreed Heinrich Hugschmidt, head of Environmental Management Services at the United Bank of Switzerland in Zurich. "The environmental problems of our clients may become our financial problems."

"We distinguish three main environmental risks: Liability risks, business risks — if our clients are affected by environmental issues, so are we — and reputation risks," he said.

One of the biggest risks from pollution was its potential impact on the security of loans, said Charles Crowe, legal adviser to HSBC Holdings PLC. "A large proportion of loans are secured on land. If the customer that has given you that security carries out a polluting activity on that land, your security is worth

nothing," he said.

Officials said shareholders and governments were increasingly insisting that firms which damaged the world around them were penalised or even had their operations shut down.

Pressure to protect the environment grew as countries became wealthier or more industrially developed. Typically this was when gross national product (GDP) reached about \$5,000 per head per year — a stage which many countries in Asia and other regions were entering, Mr. Zvinakis said.

And it was far cheaper to consider the environment before starting a project than after it was completed. "Environmental costs become progressively more expensive, the longer you wait in the industrial cycle," he said.

could learn from the mistakes of the developed world and invest now rather than later, officials said.

For example, a recent World Bank study suggested about 80 per cent of the industrial investment in South East Asia needed by 2020 still wasn't in place.

"That high rate of industrial turnover presents an opportunity. If you choose the right investment now, the clean up rate or the damage would be a lot less," Mr. Zvinakis said.

Protecting the environment also offered huge investment opportunities. "Environment is big business," said Hussein Abaza, chief of economics, trade and environment at the United Nations Environment Programme.

"The forthcoming market is for environmentally sound technologies, practices and cultures. So it is in

the best interests of banks to incorporate environmental considerations into their practices to gain more markets and more business," he added.

Mr. Crowe said sponsoring clean technology and green investment funds offered banks attractive returns.

"There is money to be made out of the environment," he said.

"You may find a petrol (gasoline) station that wants to borrow 50,000 pounds to redo the facade on his petrol station. You may be better off lending him 100,000 where he can spend the additional money putting in new stainless steel petrol tanks in his ground so they don't leak."

"You will be lending more money, so you get a better return and also you will be reducing your risk, so you win both ways."

Insurers warn of green-minded investment shift

KYOTO, Japan (R) — Support for international efforts to combat global warming is now emerging from the biggest hitters in world equity markets: Global insurance and reinsurance companies.

Concerned that the impact of a warmer planet would be devastating to the insurance business, many are using their massive presence in

global equity markets as a threat to publicly listed companies to either act fast environmentally, or risk a sell-off of their stock.

"What we are doing in essence is sounding the alarm to big business to let them know that it is in their interest to diversify and adapt to the challenges of global warming in order to remain a smart investment,"

said Andrew Dlugolecki, a general manager of Canada's largest insurer, General Accident of Britain.

Mr. Dlugolecki, attending a global conference on climate change in Kyoto, western Japan, said insurers and reinsurers, through their technical reserves and pensions, represent 50 per cent of equity investment worldwide.

Reinsurance companies, which handle and offset the massive exposure of individual insurers, would bear the brunt of an increase in natural catastrophe-related claims.

Some say global warming has caused a dramatic increase in the frequency of such calamities in recent years.

They point to hurricane

Andrew in Florida, which cost \$16.5 billion in 1992, and hurricane Opal in 1995, which caused \$2.1 billion worth of damage in the southern U.S. as examples.

Analysts say about half the total number of catastrophe-related insurance claims in the last 50 years have been made in the 1990s.

According to research by Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurer, the number of natural catastrophes has increased four-fold since the 1960s.

It estimates that the resulting economic losses from these catastrophes have increased by a factor of eight, with net insured losses increasing by 15-fold.

Insurers say that one of their few recourses against what they perceive as ever-increasing climate-related losses is a shift in investment toward green-minded companies.

"This shift in investment is already happening and it is going to continue to grow," said Tessa Tennant, of NPI Global Care Investments, which manages four listed funds worth a total \$170 million aimed at environmentally "smart" companies.

Ms. Tennant said the performance of the funds had outpaced more generalised funds, exceeding the average performance by about 50 per cent in the past three years.

Scientists say emissions from the burning of fossil fuels could wreak havoc with the climate, causing sea levels to rise and low-lying islands to be submerged. Traditional agriculture would be decimated by temperature changes.

"In the past all insurance premiums have been based on historical data. These changing weather patterns threaten to undermine these models entirely and reshape the nature of underwriting," said Julian Salt of the London-based Loss Prevention Council, a private think tank sponsored by the British insurance industry.

"If the insurers get it wrong, reinsurers will have to double their efforts to correct things. Ultimately, the markets will suffer, as insurers are forced to liquidate their investments to keep up with the growing number of claims," he said.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	HKD	INR	NGN	FRF
US Dollar	1.7817	0.6026	1.4410	130.25	1.4213	1745.10	2.0079	6.9885	
DE Mark	0.5613	0.3380	0.8086	73.09	0.7974	979.07	1.1268	3.3493	
GB Sterling	1.5595	2.9518	2.3818	215.76	2.3588	2895.99	3.3321	9.8047	
CH Franc	0.6940	123.60	0.4178	90.37	0.9860	1210.61	139.41	4.1405	
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3874	0.4623	1.1059	1.0908	19.39	154.10	4.5806	
CA Dollar	0.7035	1.2389	0.4197	1.0007	1.09	1213.86	1.3983	4.1480	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0205	0.3461	0.0825	1341.66	0.8141	11.50	3.4197	
NL Guilder	0.4980	98.71	0.2998	71.76	64.82	879.77	898.90	2.9718	
FR Franc	0.1675	0.2985	0.1009	24.1584	21.80	0.2381	33.64	33.6400	

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	EUR	GBP	CHF	JPY	HKD	INR	NGN	FRF
US Dollar	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.6400	0.3944	3.6728	1631.00	3.4045	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	5.2973	0.8325	5.1472	0.4299	5.1975	2162.43	4.8086	
Saudi Riyal	0.2655	0.1888	0.1005	0.57	0.0811	0.88	408.21	4.8086	
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	0.9483	9.66	0.9073	9.74	4061.01	5.0305	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	0.10304	0.0838	1.01	420.60	0.9353		
Kuwait Dinar	3.2687	2.3263	1.2330	1.2367	11.96	12.07	5030.39	0.9353	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	0.10212	0.1026	0.9911	0.0829	416.85	0.9269	
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.4624	0.24497	0.2482	2.3775	0.1988	2.3990	2.2237	
Egyptian	0.2937	0.2080	0.1016	0.1107	1.0892	0.0894	1.0788	449.70	

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	18.11	17.94
W. Texas	18.69	18.46
Bonny	18.11	17.94
Dubai	17.00	17.25
UL Gas	184.00	183.00

Metal Prices

Metal	Unit	Price
Gold (oz's)	288	288.5
Silver (oz's)	5.4	5.42
Platinum (oz's)	381	383
CU (3 Months)	1670	1673
CU (3 Months)	1798	1792
Zinc (3 Months)	1124	1128
Lead (3 Months)	631	635
Ni (3 Months)	5980	6020

Energy

Commodity	Unit	Price
Coffee (c/ton)	175.25	Spot
Cocoa (c/ton)	1630	Spot
Sugar (c/ton)	300.7	Spot
Wheat (c/ton)	126.5	Spot
Soya (c/ton)	24.68	Spot
Tea (c/ton)	168	Spot
Barley (c/ton)	0	Spot
Rice (c/ton)	370	Spot


Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
USD	5.84	5.85	5.88	5.93
GBP	7.51	7.59	7.68	7.71
JPY	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.24
DEM	3.90	3.72	3.81	3.91
FRF	3.45	3.59	3.74	3.86
CHF	1.51	1.55	1.65	1.78
ITL	6.10	6.00	5.68	5.43

JOU Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1736	1.1796
DE Mark	0.3969	0.3989
CH Franc	0.4911	0.4936
FR Franc	0.1196	0.1192
JP Yen	0.543	0.5457
NL Guilder	0.3523	0.3541
IT Lira	0.4052	0.4072

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET										
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDAN										
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179										
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 06/12/1997										
										
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.3	1.20	4	8080	2702560	332.00	332.00	-
N 2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	10	7200	13715	1.91	1.91	-
1.450	0.890	MID-EAST INV. BK.	69.0	0.00	3	2550	2658	1.04	1.05	+0.01
2.680	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.11	16	18000	46743	2.60	2.59	-0.01
S 4.180	1.850	JOR. KUNALT. BANK	10.4	0.00	2	1038	2024	1.99	1.95	-0.04
1.530	1.110	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	3	2350	2703	1.15	1.15	-
3.900	3.080	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	24.1	0.00	4	403	1504	3.75	3.75	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 238.70 %CHG: -0.03										
2.950	2.700	JORDAN INSURANCE	12.0	5.36	1	1000	2800	2.70	2.80	+0.10
2.170	1.000	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	8.7	0.00	1	1000	950	1.00	0.95	-0.05
2.020	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.3	8.02	1	100	187	1.92	1.87	-0.05
2.350	1.820	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.2	4.76	3	1600	3056	1.88	1.91	+0.03
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.84 %CHG: +0.87										
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	12	15335	29748	1.94	1.94	-
I 6.970	3.900	AD-DUSTOUR	29.2	3.57	13	2450	17150	6.97	7.00	+0.03
1.680	1.150	MID. EAST HOTELS	19.0	0.00	3	650	818	1.30	1.25	-0.05
3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.8	0.00	2	900	3366	3.76	3.74	-0.02
1.050	740	JORDAN KEPT. INV.	9	0.00	1	250	193	.80	.77	-0.03
1.100	900	ZARQA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	8500	7990	.96	.94	-0.02
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 108.36 %CHG: -0.33										
1.100	930	ATTANQUEB	9	0.00	2	2300	2645	1.10	1.15	+0.05
T 4.450	3.010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.7	3.58	11	17075	52786	3.11	3.07	-0.04
7.050	5.570	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.1	3.08	6	3600	23313	6.50	6.50	-0.01
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.43	5	68	715	10.55	10.54	-0.01
4.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.3	4.89	17	3050	12483	4.13	4.09	-0.04
8.500	5.000	ARAB CHEM. DISTRON.	20.8	4.41	1	100	680	6.52	6.80	+0.28
3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.5	10.59	1	150	354	2.36	2.36	-
770	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	2	900	414	.46	.46	-
1.200	510	NATIONAL INDOS.	9	0.00	6	2300	1222	.54	.53	-0.01
1.200	420	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	6	1100	468	.60	.59	-0.01
890	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM.	9	0.00	8	4500	2700	.61	.60	-0.01
1.880	890	UNIV. MOD. INDOS.	P	.25	5	1350	1182	.89	.87	-0.02
1.620	1.320	NATL. CEMENT	14.0	4.73	2	2000	2960	1.50	1.48	-0.02
1.070	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.3	0.00	1	800	712	.89	.89	-
2.070	1.340	EL -ZAY READY WEAR	48.9	0.00	2	350	487	1.39	1.39	-
1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	4	200	243	1.22	1.22	-
810	710	JORDAN STEEL	33.5	6.76	6	3750	2775	.74	.74	-
840	570	MID-EAST COMPLEX	7.5	16.39	12	22750	13880	.62	.61	-0.01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.37 %CHG: -0.25										
99 66399 120080										
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 172.07 %CHG: -0.11										
184 137850 2958416										
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 06/12/1997										
.620	.410	MACH. Eqp. REPT. MATN.	9	0.00	2	5100	2570	.50	.51	+0.01
.610	.360	JOR. TRADE PAC.	9.6	0.00	1	5000	1800	.36	.36	-
1.550	1.060	ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	77.4	0.00	5	20350	24014	1.20	1.18	-0.02
.800	.660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	7	14584	3353	.73	.73	-
.570	.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	4	8026	3290	.40	.41	+0.01
1.710	1.050	CECTUROY INV. GROUP	E	0.00	1	250	450	1.71	1.80	+0.09
1.400	.140	NATL. INV. MACH. JEMCO	9	0.00	1	250	43	.17	.17	-
.750	.380	NATL. MOLT. ENG. NAMICO	9	0.00	7	7900	3239	.41	.41	-
+.520	.420	ARAB ELECT. INDOS.	9	0.00	3	14604	5988	.42	.41	-0.01
.660	.580	MIDEST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	1	300	111	.62	.62	-
1.520	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	7	8864	9529	1.37	1.36	-0.01
.470	.290	INDOS. EMG.	9	0.00	4	2900	841	.29	.29	-
+.820	.530	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	40	122500	61630	.53	.50	-0.03
N 1.000	.660	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 75%	93.2	0.00	6	3824	1605	.67	.67	-
GRAND TOTAL 91 214224 116487										

Fears still hang over 1998 Asian Games

BANGKOK (AFP) — Fears lingered over Bangkok's readiness to host the troubled 1998 Asian Games, exactly a year ahead of the planned opening here, a Thai newspaper said on Saturday, calling for speedy action.

"A big question mark still hangs over the games complex" at one of the three main sites for the prestigious event, which is due to kick off on December 6 next year, The Nation daily said.

"The technical committee ... has performed at a sluggish pace and has so far managed little," it said.

The preparation for the 13th Asian Games, awarded to Thailand seven years ago, has been hit by delay after delay as organisers have squabbled and entered into political bickering matches.

The Olympic Committee of Asia (OCA) in September considered stripping Bangkok of its right to hold the games but relented after striking a deal under which the local Olympic committee would have more say in the preparations.

An OCA technical committee in October gave Bangkok a crucial thumbs up, saying it believed that everything would be ready in time.

But sporting sources have said one of the three key Bangkok sites, the Bangkok Land stadium site, appeared so far behind schedule that it was difficult to envisage it being completed in time for the games.

"The Bangkok Land site looks like an empty field with just a few foundations sticking up," one source who has been following preparations for the games said earlier.

"I can't imagine how they will ever get it ready on time, and anyway the highway to the area doesn't have any exit ramps yet," the source, who declined to be named, added.

Other figures close to the games said the budget appeared to be extremely tight and expressed fears that not enough cash was being allocated to games preparations.

However top Bangkok Asian Games Organising Committee (BAGOC)

officials have insisted the site will be ready — despite the fact that it is only 38 per cent complete so far — as it is to be made mainly of prefabricated concrete.

Construction of all the sports venues will be completed three months ahead of the games, with some sites being finished earlier than previously scheduled, officials said. The Nation on Saturday called for Games organisers to settle the problems of venues immediately, while taking into account the country's worst financial crisis in more than five decades.

The paper slammed reported plans by organisers to hold the first round games of the Asian Games soccer competition outside of Bangkok, saying it would be too expensive to transfer the teams across the country.

"The need of the hour calls for the saving of every baht and making optimal use of the available resources," The Nation said.

United march on as two-goal Cole downs Reds

LONDON (AFP) — In-form Andy Cole struck twice as Manchester United went six points clear at the top of the English Premiership on Saturday with a 3-1 victory over bitter rivals Liverpool at Anfield.

David Beckham scored United's other goal with a stunning free-kick as Alex Ferguson's side took full advantage of an early kick-off to turn up the heat on their title rivals playing later in the day.

After a tense first half of few chances, the match exploded into life when Cole put United in front with a clinical finish from the edge of the area on 51 minutes.

Liverpool levelled nine minutes later when Robbie Fowler converted from the penalty spot after teenage sensation Michael Owen was brought down in the area.

But the reigning champions restored their lead when England star Beckham curled in a stunning free-kick from the edge of the



Manchester United striker Andy Cole (R) scores the opening goal in the Premiership match against Liverpool, December 6. Manchester United went on to win the Premiership match 3-1 (Reuters photo)

area on 70 minutes before Cole sealed victory moments later when he bundled the ball over the line from close range as Liverpool failed to clear a corner.

Liverpool had the first chance of the game after just two minutes when a fine ball from Jamie Redknapp found Owen down the left, but his squared pass saw Fowler stab a shot wide of the near post.

The first half was short on clear chances but Liverpool skipper Steve McManaman wasted a glorious chance when he found himself clear in the box after a superb

one-two with Fowler, but on his left foot he dragged the ball wide.

Seconds later, Oyvind Leonhardsen sent Owen clear in the box with a fine pass, but that too was wasted.

The match erupted into life after the turnaround when Liverpool defender Bjorn Kvarme was caught cold in possession by Cole 20 yards out.

The Norwegian lost the ball, fell over, and could only watch as Cole ran on and fired low past James to claim his 14th goal of the season.

But Liverpool's response was to hit straight back and

grab an equaliser from the spot.

Owen was put into a good scoring position in the box, and went down under a twin challenge from Butt and Pallister. Fowler coolly sending Peter Schmeichel the wrong way.

But after 70 minutes, Beckham crashed home a powerful, curling freekick after Jamie Carragher had been penalised for blocking a Cole run.

United were now pouring forward and in the 74th minute they killed off the game from a Giggs corner. Sheringham flicking on for Cole to rifle home from close range.



Bayern Munich's Dietmar Hamann (L) and Ciriaco Sforza of Germany's first division soccer club FC Kaiserslautern fight for the ball during their match in Kaiserslautern (Reuters photo)

On the soccer field, U.S. and Iran can be 'civilised'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iran may be Washington's bete noire when it comes to foreign policy but an upcoming soccer match between the two countries in the 1998 World Cup finals has the State Department taking a sportsmanlike approach.

"If this soccer match is a sign of our ability to deal with each other at least in this one area in a civilised and positive way, I think that's something that we could applaud," State Department spokesman James Foley said Friday.

Iran's footballers will square off against the U.S. team on June 21 in Lyon, France, marking the first time that the two countries will have met in a major team sports event since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Dariush Mostafavi, the director of the Iranian Football Federation, responded by saying that Iran did not want to see any obstacles laid in the way of sporting contacts.

Speaking on French radio, he said: "We think that, during these games, it is the language of sport which must prevail. We shall respect the other team and will engage in fair play."

U.S. counterpart Alan Rothenberg meanwhile told the Persian language service of Radio France Internationale that "politics will not play an role in the match between the two sides".

The United States broke off diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980 during the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran and has since sought to isolate the Islamic regime.

Washington accuses Tehran of seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction, sponsoring international terrorism and opposing peace between Israel and its neighbors.

Full World Cup reactions

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Some reactions to the World Cup (finals draw):

Group A

Brazilian reaction: Mario Zagallo said: "I know that Brazil have the measure of Scotland as I know the 'British' style of play well having played England twice recently and it doesn't intimidate me. I realise that in 1974 we could only draw 0-0 with Scotland but things will be different this time round. Also I relish the chance of avenging our 4-2 defeat by Norway earlier this year."

Scottish reaction: Scotland coach Craig Brown said: "It couldn't come any tougher than Brazil in the opening game. We've played them three times in the World Cup (1974, 1982, 1990) and lost twice."

Morocco and Norway are easier but they are both above us in the world rankings. I think we could cause an upset against Brazil as my squad is packed with experienced players who will not be intimidated by the fact we are playing in the showcase opener. Realistically us, Norway and Morocco will be playing for second place. It's very exciting to be playing the world champions in the first match and I am looking forward to it with great anticipation."

Group B

Italian reaction: Italy coach Cesare Maldini said: "We've have to wait and see what happens on the pitch but I think it's a good draw. Maybe it's too early to judge our opponents."

Austria performed very well in qualifying and we don't know much about Cameroon and Chile. We'll have to make sure we get out and watch all of them."

Italy's star defender Paolo Maldini, veteran of two World Cup's, said: "It's definitely a favourable draw but we must make certain we win the group so we avoid Brazil."

Chilean reaction: Chile coach Nelson Acosta said: "We're worried about Italy, they're really powerful."

Group C

French reaction: France coach Aime Jacquet said: "It could have been worse for us. We know all the teams well enough, both their strengths and weaknesses, to form a match winning strategy."

Michel Platini, former French midfield great and President of the organising committee, said: "The group is relatively easy and it could have been a lot worse. We have ample opportunity to qualify for the second round. Group D with Nigeria, Spain, Bulgaria and Paraguay is a real killer."

Saudi reaction: Saudi federation president Faisal Bin Fahad said: "We are triple Asian champions and are competing in our second successive World Cup. We are confident we can do better than last time and reach the last 16, even if we don't underestimate France who must be our group favourites. We will play every match to the full and we think we can surprise quite a few people."

Group D

Spanish reaction: Spain coach Javier Clemente said: "We haven't been lucky. Our group is one of the toughest. Nigeria is the best African team — we already know a few of their players like Finidi George who plays for Betis. We're playing against them at 1430, it would have been better to play at 2100."

Bulgaria are a team we know, we drew with them at Euro 96. Paraguay is a better draw than Colombia, but they won't be easy either."

Nigerian reaction: Nigeria Football Federation president Abdul Mumini Aminu said: "The first thing we have to now is get a manager. I'm very happy with the draw and we should at least be able to get into the second round. We've been lucky. Our most dangerous opponent is Spain but we

think we can beat them.

"Paraguay are also very good but we've got good experience at the World Cup."

"We're happy to be playing our first match in Paris but we haven't yet decided where we're going to be based."

Group E

Belgium reaction: Belgium coach Georges Leekens said: "I'm a bit disappointed to find Holland in our way again."

"I hope my players will take their revenge (for qualifying), but we must concentrate most of all on Mexico and South Korea."

Korean reaction: South Korea coach Cha Bum-Kun said: "In the end it makes no difference who you get because if you want to progress you have to beat the best in the world. You can't whinge about it. There's no reason we shouldn't make the second round."

Group F

German reaction: Germany coach Berti Vogts said: The United States, Yugoslavia and Iran are good sides. We know them well and know what lies ahead of us. Don't forget three Iranian players play in the Bundesliga — that is a sign of their quality."

Iranian reaction: President of the Iranian Football Federation Dariush Mostafavi said: "I am very happy tonight. It is an honour to have to play Germany because they have won so many titles in international football. However, I think we have a chance of beating the United States because they are definitely not better than us. I don't think our match with them will be very different to other games because the football world is different to that of the political one."

Group G

Romanian reaction: Romanian coach Anghel Iordănescu said: "It's not an easy group, maybe it's even one of the hardest along with Spain."

"But I'm quite happy that my team, which is very experienced these days, has what it takes to get through."

"Anyone who thinks England is the best team could be mistaken — Colombia could also surprise us."

Tunisian reaction: Tunisia coach Henryk Kasperczak said: "It is difficult to say who will qualify from this group as they are all good teams. Romania have looked even stronger since the last World Cup (where they lost in the quarter-finals to Sweden on penalties) and their unbeaten record in the qualifiers says it all. However my Tunisian side are not frightened by anyone and we have nothing to lose."

Group H

Jamaica reaction: Jamaica coach Rene Simoes said: "No matter which group we were drawn in it was always going to be tough for us. The important thing is we qualified and we are here playing the world's best. We will take each match as it comes and with our big hearts we could win and what more can we ask for."

Argentinian reaction: Argentina coach Daniel Passarella said: "We're satisfied with our opponents, but not delighted."

"Michel Platini has told me that he's going to try and set up a friendly between France and Argentina."

"(Brazilian coach) Mario Zagallo thinks it will be an Argentina-Brazil final. But first we've got to get through the first round."

"Croatia could surprise anyone. Japan are a dynamic team we respect and we know nothing at all about Jamaica except that they have a Brazilian coach and play football well."

Kaiserslautern beat Bayern in title cruncher

BONN (AFP) — Kaiserslautern won the table-topping crunch match on Friday in the Bundesliga, completing the double over title rivals Bayern Munich with a 2-0 home win to motor seven points clear of the Bavarians.

A goal on the stroke of half time from Andreas Buck and a clincher from Bulgarian international Marian Hristov five minutes from time left Otto Rehagel's side, promoted last summer, on cloud nine after coming through one of their toughest challenges.

With the season having passed the half way mark, Kaiserslautern, who shocked Bayern 1-0 at the Olympic Stadium on the opening day, look set to win the championship for the first time since 1991, when Kalli Feldkamp was in charge.

They can now rewrite Bundesliga history by becoming the first side ever to win the title straight after promotion.

"We knew that a draw would be enough so we

hung back early on and allowed Bayern to chase the game," Buck explained.

"The team with the bigger heart won here tonight," Lautern midfielder Martin Wagner said, adding: "I think we gave some pretty good answers here to a lot of questions about our staying power."

Friday's encounter was a passionate affair before a sell-out 38,000 crowd and the home side found itself pressed back in their own half early on.

"We played better in the first half but didn't score," Bayern manager Uli Hoeness noted.

"After an unlucky goal just on half time we had to throw everything forward and that of course opened up chances for Kaiserslautern to attack on the break. They are a tough side and it's difficult to score against them when you are behind," added Hoeness.

Bayern coach Giovanni Trapattoni reacted calmly to the defeat. Bayern's second in a week following a

4-2 mauling at Leverkusen.

"I don't think we deserved to go behind in the opening 45 minutes. Both sides played well but I think we did more," the Italian said.

The experienced Rehagel can permit himself a broad smile as he was sacked two years ago after an unhappy few months at reigning champions Bayern.

He already knows what it takes to win the title, having twice performed the feat with Werder Bremen, whom he transformed from a second division outfit into one of Europe's major clubs, before his ill-fated stint at Bayern.

Third-placed Stuttgart, six points behind Bayern and one of a trio of clubs on 29 points, travel to 1860 Munich on Saturday in a bid to close the gap.

The sides below them on goal difference, Leverkusen and UEFA Cup holders Schalke, meanwhile clash head on in Leverkusen.

CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144	CINEMA	TEL: 674144
PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Risham Yance Theatre							
Chris O'Donnell & Jene Hackman ... in	Charles Gordin ... in	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi ... in	Rowan Atkinson ... in	ABDOUN Mel Gibson & Julia Roberts ... in	ABDOUN Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi ... in	TEL: 625155							
THE CHAMBER	BEETHOVEN'S 2ND	AL MASEER (Arabic)	MR. BEAN	CONSPIRACY THEORY	AL MASEER (Arabic)	NOW ON DAILY							
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:15	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE							
	THE BEAUTICIAN & THE BEAST	Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival	SLEEP WALKERS			Starring Hisham Yance and Amal Dabbas							
	Shows: 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only										

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Johnson goes for Goodwill double

NEW YORK (AFP) — Michael Johnson will try to duplicate his 200- and 400-metre Olympic and world championship double at next year's Goodwill Games, officials of the multi-sport event said Friday. Johnson captured world gold in the events in 1995 and last year became the first man to turn that Olympic double. Fellow Americans Dan O'Brien and Jackie Joyner-Kersey are the other athletes who have committed to attending the meet. Winning athletics gold at the Goodwill Games here next July could be worth more than \$200,000 under a three-tiered prize money performance incentive programme worth more than \$1.8 million. Games competition will be next July 19 to August 2, with the top prize of 100,000 dollars going to winners of five events, including the specialties of Johnson, O'Brien and Joyner-Kersey. The decathlon, heptathlon, men's and women's 100m and men's 400m will pay the top prize plus an extra \$100,000 if a world record is set. Most events will pay \$45,000 to the winner.

Charlton's Stuart fails dope test

LONDON (AFP) — Charlton's former England Under-21 international Jamie Stuart faces a Football Association misconduct charge after becoming the fifth player at the club to fail a drugs test, it emerged Friday. Stuart tested positive for cocaine and marijuana when the FA's doping control unit visited the first division club's training ground on November 17. The 21-year-old has been suspended by his club while he awaits an FA hearing, and faces a lengthy ban. Stuart is the third player to fail a drugs test this season in England, following the cases of Dean Jones at Barnsley and Shane Nicholson at West Brom.

Alexandersson signs for Wednesday

LONDON (AFP) — Sheffield Wednesday manager Ron Atkinson on Friday made his first big signing since returning to Hillsborough — IFK Gothenburg's Swedish international star Niclas Alexandersson. Atkinson snapped up the midfielder for 750,000 pounds from the Swedish giants following their recent exit from the Champions' League.

Brazil's Savio at Real Madrid

MADRID (AFP) — Brazil's Savio has just been signed by Real Madrid from Flamengo for the next five seasons after an agreement between the two clubs was reached on Friday. In exchange for Savio, Madrid have agreed to sell compatriot Ze Roberto, another Spanish player Rodrigo, plus \$5 million, according to Spanish sports daily Marca.

Edgar Davids to Juventus

ROME (AFP) — AC Milan's Dutch player Edgar Davids is set to move to Juventus, according to the Italian press on Friday. In the last few days, negotiations have become advanced and it is believed he will sign a contract till June 30, 2002.

Cruyff leaves hospital

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Johan Cruyff, considered the best Dutch player of all time, on Friday left the Amsterdam hospital where he was under observation for heart trouble. The 50-year-old former coach of Barcelona, who had a double bypass operation in 1991, had another heart attack on November 26 this year.

FIA accept Stewart team for '98

PARIS (AFP) — Formula One's ruling body the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) on Friday said it had accepted Stewart Grand Prix's entry for next season after receiving assurances that the team had the necessary means to complete the season. The FIA looked into the team's financial affairs after Stewart revealed it had lost major sponsors. But in a statement the federation said: "The FIA has now received confirmation from the auditors to Stewart Grand Prix that it has the necessary means to complete the 1998 season."

Venables leaves Portsmouth

LONDON (AFP) — Australia coach Terry Venables has left struggling English first division club Portsmouth, bringing an end to his short spell as chairman. Australia coach Venables failed to arrive for training at Portsmouth's Stoneham training ground on Friday and an announcement followed later that he had gone. Three days ago, after arriving back from Australia, Venables said it was a priority to rebuild bottom club Pompey and he admitted that he had not spent enough time at Fratton Park. But on Friday the club's assistant manager Keith Waldon said.

Ruggeri retires

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — The former Argentinean captain Oscar Ruggeri announced here on Saturday that he would retire from football on Sunday — ending a great career which took in two World Cup finals, beating Germany in 1986 and losing to the same opponents in 1990. The 35-year-old Ruggeri, who ended his 11 year international career after Argentina were knocked out by Romania in the 1994 World Cup finals, said he was retiring for personal reasons. "Sunday's the day to say goodbye. It was a very personal decision, not even my family knew," the rugged defender said. "I always said that the day I felt like becoming a coach and I lost the hunger to win would be the right time to retire," Ruggeri added.

2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup
Jordan's Al Salt score 1st victory,
move to third place in Group A

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Al Salt drew a big smile on the faces of their loyal fans Saturday after beating Qatar's Qatar Club 26-18 (13-7) on the fourth day of the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup currently underway in Amman with ten teams participating.

Al Salt's win compensated for their poor performance in their 18-30 defeat to champions Egypt's Al Ahli and moved them to third place behind UAE's Al Ahli and Egypt's Al Ahli who lead the group with 4 points each in Group A.

The other Jordanian team in the tournament, Al Arabi, are currently fourth in Group B, and will play Kuwait's Al Qadissieh Sunday.

Al Arabi had tied Saudi Arabia's Alhi Jeddah 35-35 Friday.

Al Salt 26 Qatar Club 18: After losing to Egypt's Al Ahli, Al Salt started the match with one thing in mind — not to fail their loyal fans.

Al Salt began with accurate passes between Imad Tadros and Mazen Yusseef who undertook the mission of scoring.

Al Salt's fast movements took the Qatari team by surprise and their defence looked helpless against Al Salt's Mohammad Hindawi's direct hits.

Al Salt ended the first half leading 13-7.

In the second half, Al Salt looked more relaxed and confident and kept the pressure on Qatar's weak defence to end the match

Group A	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
UAE's Al Ahli	2	2	-	-	65	45	4
Egypt's Al Ahli	2	2	-	-	61	37	4
Jordan's Al Salt	2	1	-	1	44	48	2
Qatar's Qatar	3	-	-	3	59	87	-
Leb's Sadaqah	1	-	-	1	23	35	-

Group B	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Al Ahli S.A	3	1	2	-	90	87	4
Al Rayyan	2	1	1	-	63	52	3
Al Olympi	2	1	-	1	62	51	2
Al Arabi	2	-	1	1	61	72	1
Al Qadissieh	1	-	-	1	22	36	-

Sunday's schedule of matches

Kuwait's Al Qadissieh vs. Jordan's Al Arabi	3 p.m.
UAE's Al Ahli vs. Egypt's Al Ahli	5 p.m.
Jordan's Al Salt vs. Lebanon's Al Sadaqah	7 p.m.

with a precious 26-18 win.

Al Salt will have another big chance to improve their standing Sunday when they face Lebanon's lowly Al Sadaqah at the bottom of the table.

In Group B, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli still lead with 4 points after a 26-26 tie with second placed Qatar's Al Rayyan.

Al Ahli 26 Al Rayyan 26: Al Ahli known for their speed and accurate passes looked tired facing Al Rayyan's solid defence.

The Saudi team depending on Afif Belhareth and Ahmad Masoud was able to create more scoring chances for Abdul Rahman Ayed and Hassan Jadani.

On the other hand, Al Rayyan's players were able to stand tough against Al Ahli's scoring and ended the first half with a 13-11 win.

Al Ahli struggled hard against Al Rayyan's swift attacks by Ahmad Salem and Mubarak Al Ali.

The match was slower towards the end finishing 26-26.

The Saudi team was satisfied with adding one point as they stayed in the lead followed by Al Rayyan in the second place.

Egypt's Al Ahli played Lebanon's Al Sadaqah in Saturday's late Group A match.

In Friday's late match, Egypt's Al Ahli overcame Qatar Club 31-19 (16-16).

Meanwhile, the Jordan Handball Federation announced that they have allocated cash rewards for Jordan's two teams in the tourney — Al Salt and Al Arabi — JD 2,000 if they finish third, JD1,000 for fourth place and JD500 for fifth place.

Barkley takes NBA to Mexico

HOUSTON (AFP) — After four successful regular-season ventures in Japan, the National Basketball Association continues its global push Saturday with a first-ever game in Mexico City.

The Houston Rockets and Dallas Mavericks are expected to pack 20,000 into the Sports Palace.

Houston's Charles Barkley is already joking about what he and team-

mate Kevin Willis will do in Mexico.

"I'm going to take care of the margaritas and Kevin Willis will take care of the senioritas," Barkley said.

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QJ9

SOUTH
47
AKQJ1098
Q3
454

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1C Pass Pass Pass
4C

Opening lead: Five of C

Most bridge players feel that their opponents always hold better cards. Thus they tend to cling to every high card they have, sometimes to their great detriment.

We like North's raise to two hearts despite a balanced hand and only three-card support. A one-trump response tends to be discour-

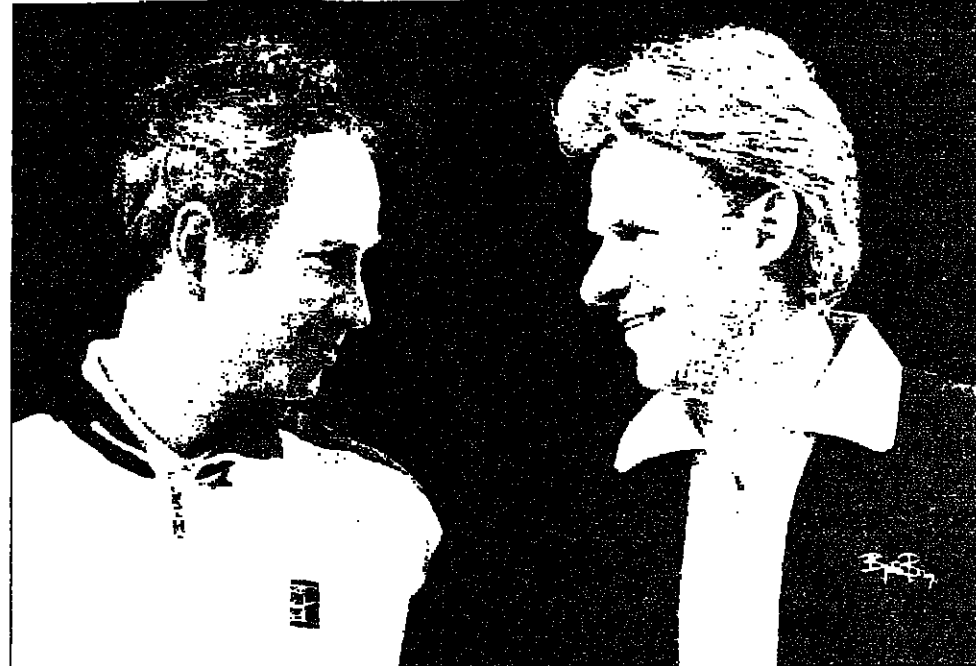
aging and, with 9 high-card points there is no reason to slow partn down. South's raise to game is automatic.

West's lead of a low diamond got the defense off to a good start because it attacked the only entry to dummy's spades. Declarer played low. East rose with the king and declarer followed with the three.

The diamond continuation was taken on in the closed hand, declarer drew trumps in two rounds and then led a spade to the queen and ace.

The club shift from East was automatic, and declarer had no counter. South tried running all the trumps, but the defenders had no trouble hanging on to clubs. In the fullness of time declarer had to concede two tricks in that suit for down one.

Declarer was unlucky in West's choice of opening lead. We would probably have selected a club and declarer would have had no problem. Still, South could have salvaged the hand by jettisoning the queen of diamonds under the king at trick one. Later, South can try for the fulfilling trick by finessing the ten of diamonds and, when that holds, the game is in the bag.



Legendary tennis rivals John McEnroe (L) and Bjorn Borg smile at one another before the start of their seniors match at the Royal Albert Hall. The two had not met for a showdown in Britain since 1981 at Wimbledon. McEnroe won this time around with a score of 2-6 6-3 and 10-7 in the deciding tiebreak (Reuters photo)

McEnroe and Borg set
to meet again at Wimbledon

LONDON (AFP) — John McEnroe, three times Wimbledon champion, and Bjorn Borg, a consecutive five-time winner, could meet again on Wimbledon's famous Centre Court in the not too distant future.

McEnroe, after beating Borg at the Honda Challenge Senior Singles at the Royal Albert Hall on Friday said he had suggested to Wimbledon referee Alan Mills that the All England Club should stage a singles tournament for the great players of the past.

"I would love to play Bjorn again on the Centre Court," said McEnroe, "and meet players like Jimmy (Connors), Boris (Becker) and Lendl again at Wimbledon. So I've asked Alan Mills to push the idea."

Mills was enthusiastic about McEnroe's suggestion, saying: "I think it is a great idea. John talked to me about it just before his match today and I shall certainly discuss it with the Order of Play Committee. "Then, if they agree,

we can put it to the All England Club committee for approval."

Mills pointed out it was too late for the 1998 Wimbledon but 1999 is a possibility.

"If John played Bjorn again at Wimbledon it would have to be on the Centre Court or Number One because so many people would want to watch them," he said.

Friday's match, a round robin clash, saw McEnroe lose the first set 6-2, win the second 6-3 and then clinch victory after 79 minutes by taking the

deciding tie break by 10-7 in a new points system. In normal tennis rules, after 6-6 a tiebreak is won by the first player to get a two-point lead.

McEnroe is now 38 and Borg 41 but the two former greats, meeting in Britain for the first time since the 1981 Wimbledon final, put on a superb display.

It brought memories flooding back of those two great years when Borg beat McEnroe in the 1980 Wimbledon final and then lost to the fiery American in the 1981 final.

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Iraq defends decision to suspend oil exports

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Saturday defended its decision to cut off oil exports to protest inadequate distribution of food and medicine under the U.N. oil-for-food deal and launched another broadside against the United States.

"Iraq's decision to suspend oil exports is right and legitimate," said the official newspaper Babel run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday.

"It is a response to the transformation of the oil-for-food deal into a political instrument aimed at Iraq and its people," the daily said.

Iraq stopped pumping oil through its main pipeline to Turkey on Friday and warned exports would only resume when U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan approves a new plan for delivery and distribution of goods under the oil-for-food deal.

U.S. President Bill Clinton slammed President Hussein for halting the crude sales, saying he was "responsible for the suffering of his own people" and that the suspension had nothing to do with the oil-for-food deal.

"This is about some other ways that (President Hussein) can manipulate the feelings of people beyond the borders of Iraq, even if he has to let im-

cent children die to do it, so he can continue to pursue a weapons-of-mass-destruction programme. It's wrong and the world community should not let him get away with it," he said on Friday.

The U.S. State Department on Friday disputed Iraqi claims that food and medicine shipments have been held up, saying that less than five per cent of the 1,600 to 1,800 applications for purchases have been delayed.

The oil-for-food agreement provides for sanctions-hit Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to pay for urgently needed food and medicine to help the Iraqi population.

The U.N. Security Council on Thursday renewed the deal, which came into force in December last year, for another six months.

Iraq had threatened to halt oil exports unless the Security Council established a direct link between the oil sales time frame and that of the distribution of food and medicine which has been subject to long delays.

But Britain and the United States rejected the Iraqi proposal which was backed by France and Russia, and stressed it was up to Iraq to provide the U.N. with a new

Iraq says it lost \$120 billion under seven-year embargo

SHARJAH (AFP) — Iraq's commerce minister estimated Saturday that the U.N. embargo on the country has cost it some \$120 billion in trade losses since it went into effect seven years ago.

Mahdi Saleh, on a visit here for the third Afro-Arab Commercial Fair, also said that "Iraq lost 1.25 million women and children" during the embargo.

The United Nations imposed a trade embargo on Iraq following Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

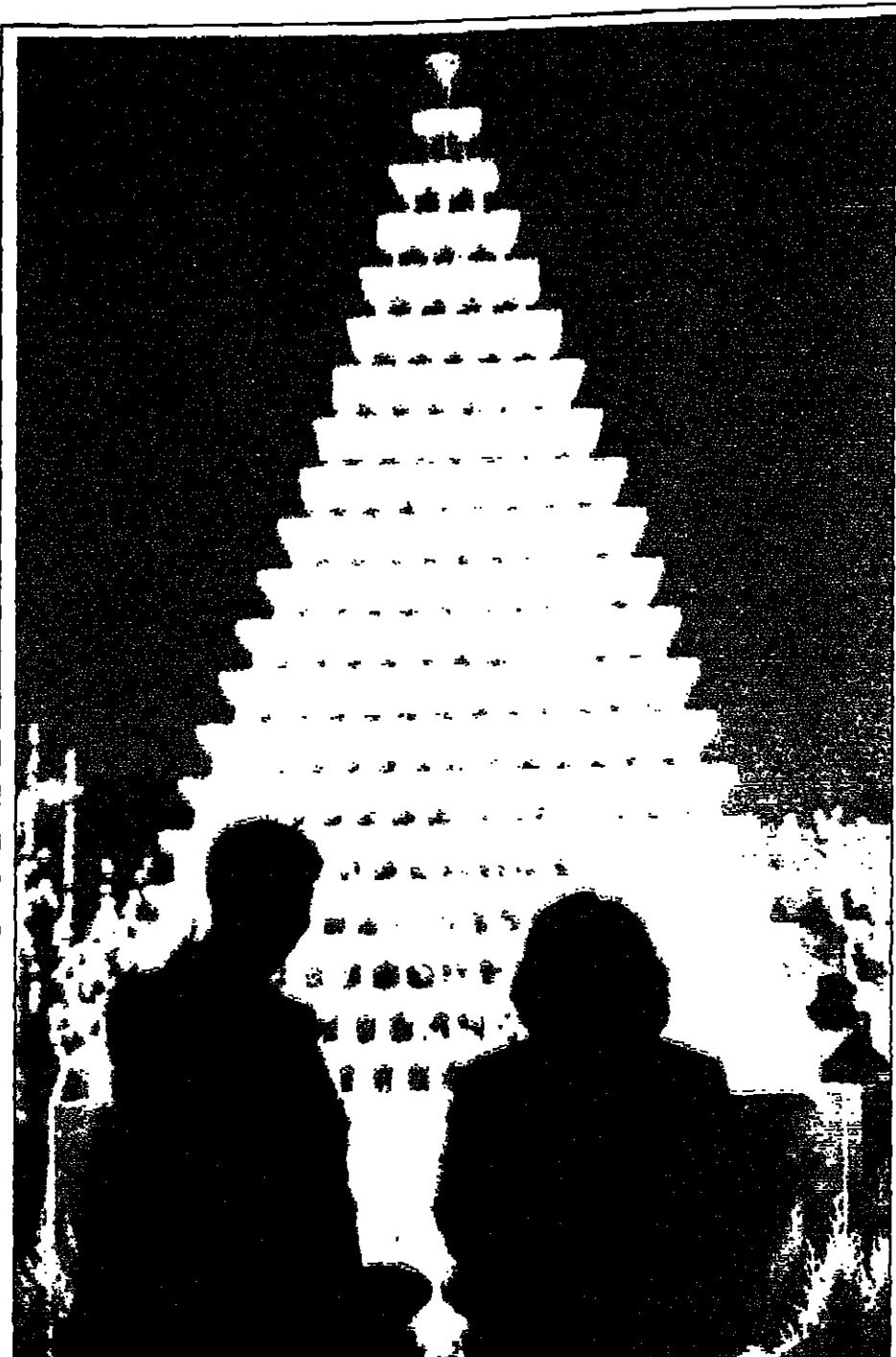
Babel apologised to buyers of Iraqi crude but said that all contracts for the June-to-December second phase of the agreement had been honoured.

Saddam Zaban Nassiri, the executive director of Iraq's Oil Export Organisation, said he could not provide exact figures for the amount of oil exported during the past six months but that all contracts had been met.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah warned meanwhile that Iraq remains a threat to its Gulf Arab neighbours and that Western naval forces were needed in the region.

"Kuwait is not the only country threatened by the Iraqi regime," he told the United Arab Emirates daily Al Bayan. "All states in the region are still vulnerable to the adventures of this regime."

Until these efforts succeed, the pipelines will be closed and not a drop of oil will flow," it said.



JAPAN'S SPARKLING CHRISTMAS: A couple is silhouetted in front of a Christmas tree lit up at a Tokyo park Saturday. The four metres-tall tree shaped by 3,000 champagne glasses containing yellow liquid attracts visitors to the park until Dec. 25 (AP Photo)



Egyptian court says no alimony for obese woman

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian court turned down a divorced woman's request for alimony, saying she had forced her husband to leave her because she had put on weight and neglected her appearance, the Al Akhbar daily reported. It said an appeal court in the coastal town of Alexandria threw out the unnamed woman's request for \$9,400 after her husband complained that she had stopped looking after him and herself, which drove him into the arms of his secretary. The daily also quoted the husband as telling the court that his wife spent too much time consulting quacks in an effort to fall pregnant.

Alien doctor on uranium diet fails to cure elderly

PESCARA (AFP) — Two elderly Italians paid more than 600 million lire (\$367,000) for uranium to feed an extra-terrestrial doctor they had been told would cure their ailments. Police said three tricksters persuaded the women that the alien, called Sagyr, could cure them provided he was given uranium for nourishment. They eventually forked out 624 million lire before, having failed to spot any improvement in their infirmity, decided to call the police. The fraudsters were jailed by a court in this Italian city to 30 months and fined 1.5 million lire each.

Father Christmas robs service station

ASCHAFFENBURG (AFP) — Santa Claus made an unexpected early stop at a service station in this south-east German town overnight, pulling a gun out of his sack of goodies and making off with about \$3,000, police said Saturday. "Give me the money, all of it," Santa told the two employees at the cash register, firing several gunshots to show he was serious. He managed to flee after the hold-up.

Old-style catamaran quits Peru on historic round-world sail

LIMA (AFP) — A catamaran built to an ancient traditional design has set sail from Peru on a seven-year, round-the-world mission to try to prove Christopher Columbus was not the first to cross the oceans. The mahogany vessel is built according to techniques used before Columbus landed in what became known as the West Indies in 1492. Gene Savoy, who is organising the expedition, said the aim was to show that people could have sailed the oceans between continents before Columbus and the Inca empires.

Five per cent believe chocolates increase chance of sex — survey

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Five per cent of Americans believe that giving a box of chocolate improves their chances of getting sex, an industry survey shows. Men are twice as likely as women to believe boxed chocolate increases their chances of sex — eight per cent of men versus three per cent of women. Nonetheless, 68 per cent of those surveyed said giving chocolates will not improve chances for sex. "There is a correlation between chocolates and sex," said Chip Huggins of See's Candies, one of the companies involved in the survey. "We wanted to know how many men or women would acknowledge that fact. Some did, but there were quite a few probably who probably believe it but don't admit it."

Turk court official calls for Islamist ban — press

ANKARA (R) — A judicial official has recommended that the constitutional court outlaw the main opposition Islamist Welfare Party for anti-secular activities, the Turkish press said on Saturday.

The Hurriyet daily said the constitutional court reporter submitted a 400-page report to the court's panel of 11 judges calling for Welfare to be outlawed for "becoming a focus for actions against the constitution."

Other leading daily papers carried similar stories. Welfare, the biggest group

in Turkey's parliament, faces closure by the court on charges of threatening the country's secular constitution and seeking to impose strict Islamic law.

The reporter's job is to summarise lengthy documents for the judges but his opinions are not binding on the court. Welfare leader Necmettin Erbakan played down the significance of any recommendation by the reporter.

"His role is to clarify certain issues. He is not in a position to make decisions," Anatolian News Agency quoted Mr. Erbakan as say-

ing. He criticised what he called media speculation about the case. "We should leave the judges in peace and allow them to get on with their job."

The case is to enter its final phase at a hearing on Wednesday. It is not clear when a verdict is likely.

The case is part of a judicial onslaught on all things Islamist since former prime minister Erbakan began to lose his hold on power six months ago. He was replaced by conservative Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz in June.

Pope raises issue of ethnic minority to Turkish envoy

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope John Paul II on Friday urged tolerance for minority peoples in a speech directed at Turkey, under fire for the treatment of its Kurdish minority.

"True harmony within a nation and between nations can only be maintained if the natural and legitimate differences between peoples, rather than being repressed as a cause of division, are seen as an enriching reality," the Pope told the new Turkish ambassador to the Holy See, Akhan Guven.

Without mentioning the Kurds by name, he said: "Rigorous respect for the cultural, moral and spiritual needs of individuals and communities, based on the dignity of the person and on the specific identity of each community, is an essential requirement for the well-being of every society."

About one-fifth of Turkey's 60 million people are ethnic Kurds. Many are fully integrated, but others chafe at being denied cultural freedoms, such as Kurdish schools and broadcasting.

Turkey has been fighting a nearly 14-year-old war against a small group of Kurdish rebels it labels terrorists. The campaign has brought charges of harsh repression and human rights violations, which have become a stumbling block in efforts to grow closer to Turkey's European allies.

Respect for the cultural traditions of a separate people allows a country "to present itself within the international community as an example of that peace and harmony which should prevail throughout the world," Pope John Paul said.

Egypt takes on U.K. PR firm to repair battered image

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian government has engaged the services of a British public relations firm to restore overseas confidence following the Luxor massacre on Nov. 17 in which 58 foreign holiday-makers were killed.

The deal had been signed with Lowe Bell Good Relations, the Egyptian tourism ministry said Saturday. It gave no details of the value or duration of the contract.

The British firm confirmed that it was now working for the Egyptian government. "The Egyptian Ambassador Adel El Gazzar is seeking advice on how best to look to

protect tourism and restore confidence and I do not think anyone is under any illusions about what the situation is like," chairman Jeffrey Lyles told AFP.

"Our main task will be to ensure people know what is going on in the country and to ensure that tourists know they can travel safely," Mr. Gazzar defended the decision to engage a public relations firm in Saturday's edition of the government-owned newspaper Al Ahrar.

"Developed countries often resort to public relations after terrible events," he said.

A mass stay-away by overseas tourists has decimated Egypt's key tourism sector

and the government has been forced to massively scale down its hopes for future earnings.

Receipts had been expected to rise to \$4 billion next year from \$3.6 billion this year.

It is the second time in recent years that the Egyptian government has taken on a Western public relations firm.

Following the first wave of attacks in the current Islamist campaign which began in 1992, the Egyptian government engaged the services of another firm. Its services consisted mainly of distributing publicity videos on Egyptian antiquities.

Israel's arsenal should face same restrictions as Iraq — Tlass

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Israel's weapons arsenal should be subject to the same restrictions as Iraq, while Arabs have the right to develop any weapons to counter the Israeli state, Syria's defence minister said in remarks Saturday.

"How can we justify giving a free hand to Israel's research into strengthening and developing every means of mass destruction, while blockading Iraq on the pretext that it has some biological weapons," Mustapha Tlass said.

The defence minister told Al Rai Al Aam that Iraq "is yielding to [U.N.] Security Council resolutions and implementing them," refer-

ring to demands that Baghdad dismantle its weapons of mass destruction under U.N. supervision.

"Syria and other Arab states have the right to develop the defensive weapons that they see appropriate to be able to confront hostile Israel," Mr. Tlass told the Kuwaiti daily when asked about Israel's arsenal.

The minister added that Israel "does not hesitate to practice its daily attacks upon our [Arab] people in the occupied territories and Lebanon, and continues to occupy a piece of our land" in the Golan Heights.

ready to confront any likely aggression launched on us by Israel or anyone else," the minister added.

Arab states accuse Israel of developing nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction that threaten the region, although Tel Aviv has never admitted to having any nuclear capability.

Israel has accused Syria of developing chemical arms. An oil embargo imposed by the U.N. on Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait cannot be lifted until inspectors certify that Iraq no longer has any weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical or biological arms.

Sudanese trade minister to visit Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudanese Trade Minister Osman Hadi Ibrahim will visit Egypt in January amid efforts by both

countries to patch up differences, a senior Egyptian cabinet member said on Saturday. The announcement came as

the head of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), John Garang, wrapped up a historic 12-day visit to Egypt on Saturday.

Relations between Cairo and Khartoum have been frozen since 1989, when General Omar Beshir took power at the head of an Islamist government in Sudan.

Ties took a turn for the worse after Egypt accused Sudan of involvement in a 1995 bid to kill President Hosni Mubarak during a visit to Ethiopia, but over the past few weeks both sides have said they wanted to improve relations.

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